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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the pervasiveness of administrator and faculty involvement in, understanding of, and support for outcomes assessment in Virginia's public colleges and universities and explored critical factors influencing administrator and faculty support of outcomes assessment. Data were collected through mailed questionnaires and follow-up interviews with administrators and faculty (N=810) at state-supported doctoral-granting universities (N=6), comprehensive colleges (N=8), and community colleges (N=23) in Virginia. Analysis provided data that supported four conclusions: (1) deans/department heads did not see themselves as strongly supporting formal assessment in 1990 and predicted a substantial decline in support if external pressures were removed; (2) least supportive of all types of faculty were those from doctoral-granting universities; (3) common factors seemed to be more negative than positive, and the most important factors were forces external to the institutions; and (4) with few exceptions, neither the negativism nor positivism were viewed as being extreme. Growth in administrator and faculty support for outcome assessments had occurred by 1990, but such growth was viewed as incomplete. Tables and graphs are included. Contains 32 references and an appendix. (GLR)

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THE ASSESSMENT MANDATES: HOW PERVASIVE ARE THEY?

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ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Red Lion-Jantzen Beach in Portland, Oregon, November 1-4, 1990. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

INTRODUCTION

Efforts to more closely oversee and obtain information on the nature and quality of the process and product of higher education predate the founding of the American republic (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976; Herbst, 1982). The current public interest in assessment of student learning and outcomes in higher education can be traced more specifically to growing uncertainty in recent decades about the quality of the product of American higher education. It is clear that the push to assess has been fueled by the concerns of government officials, business leaders, and critics both within and outside higher education that undergraduates receive their degrees in spite of relatively low levels of skill and knowledge, and that the undergraduate curriculum is fragmented and incoherent (Association of American Colleges, 1985; Bennett, 1984; Bloom, 1982; Bonham, 1980; Ewell, 1989; Hacker, 1986; Hartle, 1986; Jaschik, 1985; Lawrence & Green, 1980; National Governor's Association, 1986; Southern Regional Education Board, 1985). "Loss of confidence" in higher education on the parts of state officials has been found to be an important factor in spurring the development of current state assessment policies (Ewell, 1989). In spite of such concerns, in most states officials have been reluctant to dictate to colleges and universities how to address these issues, and have held institutions themselves largely responsible for planning and

conducting assessment and then determining what to do based on their findings (Aper, 1989; Ewell, 1989; Fox, 1989; Hillman, 1989; Krech, 1989).

Political leaders have embraced assessment as a means of asking colleges and universities to demonstrate concretely the value of what they do, and to use what they find to improve their practice. This information is in turn expected to help policy makers evaluate and justify large public expenditures on higher education. A number of researchers have observed that policy-makers and state higher education officials often appear to view new assessment requirements as a way to infuse new life into a somnolent patient, a way to force higher education to reexamine itself, be more responsive, and make adjustments as it moves toward the twenty-first century (Alfred and Weissman, 1988; Astin, 1985; Bennett, 1985; Bennett & Peltason, 1985; Coombs, 1985; Delattre, 1988; Ewell, 1984; Ewell 1985a; Ewell, 1987a; Hogarth, 1987; Newman, 1985; Sanchez, 1987; Wagner, 1989).

Research on the assessment movement has largely focused on policy development, implementation, and expectations (Aper, 1989; Ewell,1989,1990). This study addressed a different question, namely, have state assessment policies diffused through the administrative and instructional fabric of public higher education. Specifically, this question focused on four groups of actors within institutions: chief academic officers,

institutional assessment coordinators, academic department heads, and faculty. The questions for each of these groups related to their relative levels of involvement in the development and revision of their institution's and department's assessment plans; their understanding of the purpose and application of assessment activities; and their support for outcomes assessment (i.e., the degree to which they would approve of and support assessment activities on their campus regardless of external mandates or reporting requirements). Additionally, data were sought to help explain what factors have been important in developing broad based administrative and faculty involvement in, understanding of, and support for assessment. Where have such attitudes and actions been generated? Do these factors vary by type of institution? What have been the critical factors influencing the perceptions of administrators and faculty as to the importance of outcomes assessment? In short what factors have tended to limit the wide-spread adoption of assessment as policy and practice or conversely, to promote it?

Assessment has been formal state policy in Virginia for almost four years. In that time, it has been made abundantly clear that both state officials and institutional proponents of assessment believe that for assessment to be meaningful as a catalyst for improvement in higher education, "ownership" of the process must be assumed by campus administrators and faculty.

Until now there has been no systematic research to ascertain the degree to which such acceptance has indeed occurred on college and university campuses.

RATIONAL FOR THE STUDY

Virginia's tradition of institutional autonomy in higher education underscores the assumption that assessment activities will flourish to the degree that they are accepted as part of the culture of the institution (Miller, 1989). Virginia, like many states that have followed it into the assessment arena, has emphasized local initiative, but that does not overshadow the fact that the mandate to do assessment was a "top-down" directive from authorities external to the institution. State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) officials have sought to cultivate support for assessment by focusing on two groups of college and university personnel: chief academic officers and assessment coordinators. By 1989-90, SCHEV officials have been discussing outcomes assessment for almost five years with college and university presidents through the General Professional Advisory Committee (GPAC) (composed of institutions' presidents), and with chief academic officers through the Instructional Programs Advisory Committee (IPAC). Based on 1989 annual progress reports to SCHEV from all Virginia public colleges and universities, state higher education officials concluded that many college and university chief academic officers are beginning

to recognize the potential benefits of outcomes assessment for their institutions (Miller, 1989).

While chief academic officers have served as formal liaisons between their institutions and SCHEV through IPAC, it has been the institutional assessment coordinators who have received the most concentrated attention from SCHEV officials and who have, in turn, been directly responsible for overseeing most institutional work completed. Prior to 1986-87, only James Madison University among Virginia colleges and universities had an explicit assessment plan, although at many institutions, informal assessment activities had generally been conducted by offices of institutional research. In 1986-87, at many institutions, personnel from Institutional Research received the responsibility of guiding the development of formal institutional assessment plans. Once the role of assessment coordinator was delineated on many campuses in 1987-88, this coordinator became the focus for SCHEV officials to begin the process of involving institutional division/department heads and faculty. Statewide annual outcomes assessment workshops and conferences, as well as one-on-one working sessions, have been the primary approaches SCHEV officials have used to educate and encourage these new actors in the unfolding assessment effort. From 1988 on, SCHEV officials began encouraging faculty to attend these workshops and conferences.

Since 1985, then, SCHEV officials have promoted assessment and have sought to facilitate exchanges of practical knowledge about campus assessment between chief academic officers and assessment coordinators of Virginia's public colleges and universities. In turn, SCHEV has relied upon these institutional officers to communicate effectively expectations for and methods to conduct assessment. In so doing, SCHEV officials have sought indirectly, to positively influence division/department head and faculty involvement in, understanding of, and support for assessment. SCHEV officials have operated on the assumption that through the creation of campus-wide division/department-specific committees intended to plan and help implement assessment procedures, assessment coordinators and division/department heads have over time introduced progressively larger segments of the faculty to outcomes assessment (Miller, 1989).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given that formal outcomes assessment activities have been conducted at all public colleges and universities in Virginia since at least 1987, it was anticipated that some evidence of the degree to which administrators and faculty have begun taking ownership of their institution's assessment activities could be found. Given this assumption, the purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to investigate the pervasiveness of administrator and faculty involvement in, understanding of, and support for

outcomes assessment in Virginia's public colleges and universities; and (2) to explore critical factors influencing administrator and faculty support of outcomes assessment.

METHODS

Two data collection strategies were used. The first involved a broad-based mailed-questionnaire designed primarily to collect quantitative data to address the initial concern of the study--pervasiveness of perceived involvement, understanding, and importance of formal outcomes assessment. The second involved follow-up interviews of selected administrators and faculty from two **COMMUNITY** colleges, two **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities, and two **DOCTORAL**-granting universities.

The mailed-questionnaire was designed to produce quantitative data to answer Research Question #1. A short version was distributed to all chief academic officers (**CAO**) and assessment coordinators (**AC**); a longer version contained additional questions and was distributed to a representative sample of deans/department heads (**DDh**) and faculty (**FAC**) of departments which had been involved in a campus assessment program during at least the 1988-89 and/or 1989-90 academic years. Both versions were distributed in March 1990 to administrators and faculty at 37 state-supported **DOCTORAL**-granting universities (n = 6), **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/ universities (n = 8), and **COMMUNITY** colleges (n = 23) in

Virginia.

All respondents were asked to indicate their degree of **INVOLVEMENT** in the development of their institution's overall assessment plan in both 1987 and 1990. Possible responses were 0 = none; 1 = low; 2 = moderate; and 3 = high. The respondents were also asked to indicate their degree of **UNDERSTANDING** of their institution's assessment plan in both 1987 and 1990. Possible responses were again 0 = none; 1 = low; 2 = moderate; and 3 = high. Finally, each respondent was asked to indicate the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** of the formal outcomes assessment process in 1987, 1990, and 1996 for each the following individuals/groups:

1. chief academic officers
2. assessment coordinators
3. deans/department heads
4. faculty

Possible responses ranged from 1 = low to 10 = high. The **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** for 1996 was a prediction based on the following hypothetical condition: "Suppose by 1996, SCHEV no longer required official outcomes assessment."

The design for this portion of the study was a three-factor within-subjects design with repeated measures on one factor. The three factors were 1) Institution Type; 2) Primary Responsibility; and 3) Year (the repeated measure). Due to the fact that the chief academic officer and the assessment coordinator were primarily responsible for the initial planning and development of the institutional assessment plan and to the

fact that there could be only one respondent of each type from each institution, these two categories were combined into one category called administration (ADM). The data were analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS Version 5.128). Separate analyses were conducted for each of the six dependent variables:

1. respondent's involvement
   1987 and 1990 only
2. respondent's understanding
   1987 and 1990 only
3. respondent's perception of importance by CAO
   1987, 1990, and 1996
4. respondent's perception of importance by AC
   1987, 1990, and 1996
5. respondent's perception of importance by DDH
   1987, 1990, and 1996
6. respondent's perception of importance by FAC
   1987, 1990, and 1996

The second data collection strategy, personal interviewing, was conducted to confirm findings from the mailed-questionnaires and to collect additional information to answer Research Question #2. Interviews were designed to identify and explore in more depth institution-specific critical factors which have and continue to influence administrator and faculty perceptions of the importance of formal outcomes assessment. The first area addressed in the interview strategy was general information relating to the specific characteristics of the institutions and individual respondents. The second area focused on how individuals had been encouraged to regard formal outcomes assessment as an important part of one's job. The third area

focused on institution-specific assessment **procedures** and measurement **instruments** which administrators and faculty either selected or developed. The fourth area concerned institution/department-specific **activities** which were designed to sustain or enhance existing perceptions of importance. The final area addressed any **additional comments** on assessment that an interviewee wanted to make related to accountability, funding, morale/satisfaction, faculty development, curriculum improvement, teaching, and student learning.

RESULTS

This section of this paper has been divided into two major parts, each dealing with one of the two research questions, respectively. Each major part has been further subdivided to provide a breakdown of quantitative and qualitative findings pertinent to each question.

PART I: Quantitative Data Analyses of Research Question #1

Of the 1,101 mailed-questionnaires distributed to CAOs, ACs, DDHs, and FAC, 810 completed questionnaires were returned (73.6%). For purposes of this paper, only the responses to the common items on both versions have been examined within the context of the first research question of this study:

> What are the past, present, and predicted perceptions of the importance of formal outcomes assessment among and within critical groups (i.e., provosts/academic deans, assessment coordinators, deans/division/department heads, and faculty) across types of institutions?

The hypotheses of interest in this portion of the study are the within-subjects effects: the **YEAR** effect and the interactions with the **YEAR** variable--**TYPE * YEAR**, **PRI/RES * YEAR**, and **TYPE * PRI/RES * YEAR**.

Year Effect

Note that for each of the six analyses, **YEAR** was statistically significant ($p < .05$). The Summary ANOVA tables for these six analyses are found in Appendix #1 (see pages 50, 51, and 52). The means and standard deviations for each dependent variable for each year are found in Table 1 (see page 12). For the **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** variables, these data indicate that, as expected, the means for 1990 for the total group of respondents were significantly higher than were the means for 1987. For all of the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** variables, the means were significantly higher for 1990 than for 1987, and then significantly lower for 1996 than for 1990. These data illustrate the increase in the importance of the assessment mandate from 1987 to 1990 which reflects the increased emphasis given the mandate by SCHEV. Also illustrated is the fact that, if this emphasis and persistent support do not continue through 1996, the importance of the mandate will wane.

Now consider the perceived importance across the four different respondent groups within each of the two years. These data illustrate that all respondents indicated that the **PERCEIVED**

Table 1

YEAR MAIN EFFECT

	1987		1990		1996	
	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.
INVOLVEMENT	1.246	(1.165)	1.892	(1.047)		
UNDERSTANDING	1.518	(1.083)	2.272	(0.799)		
IMPORTANCE (CAO)	6.951	(2.805)	8.245	(1.933)	6.219	(2.839)
IMPORTANCE (AC)	7.983	(2.372)	9.016	(1.457)	7.326	(2.744)
IMPORTANCE (DDH)	5.426	(2.652)	7.093	(2.313)	5.388	(2.721)
IMPORTANCE (FAC)	3.654	(2.032)	5.168	(2.148)	4.035	(2.311)

IMPORTANCE of the assessment coordinators (**IMPAC**) and the chief academic officer (**IMPCAO**) were substantially higher than for the deans/department heads (**IMPDDH**) and the faculty (**IMPFAC**). These data reflect the fact that the assessment coordinators and the chief academic officers had been more involved in planning the assessment program and thus had better understood the process than had the deans/department heads and the faculty.

Type * Year Interaction

The **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect was statistically significant for five of the six dependent variables ($p < .05$). The means and standard deviations for this interaction are found in Table 2 (see page 14); these means are plotted in Figure 1 (see pages 15, 16, and 17).

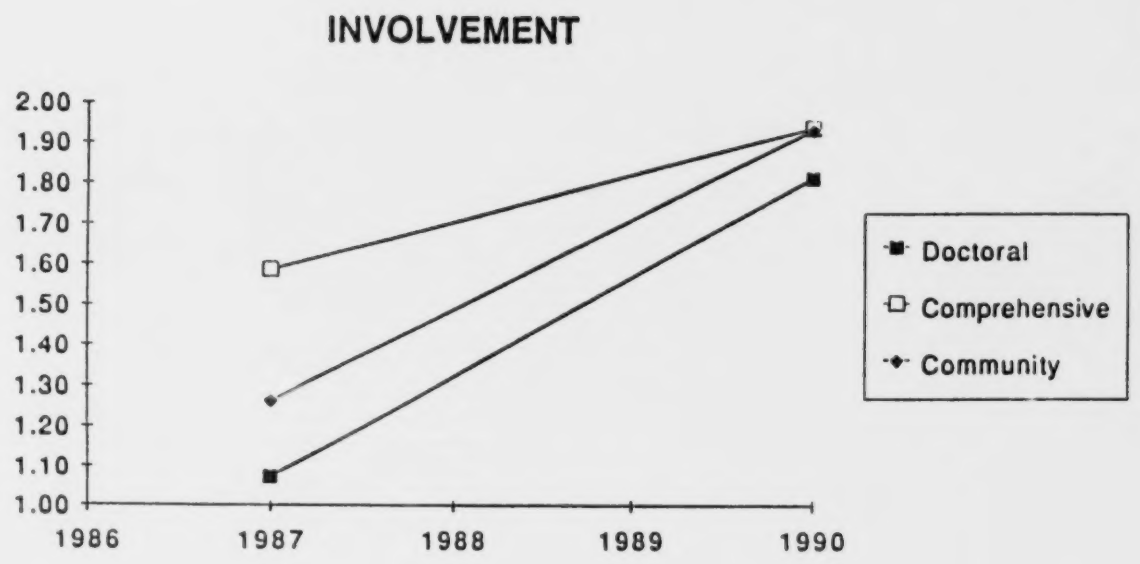
Note that for both the **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** variables, the pattern of interaction is the same. For both variables, the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities had significantly larger means in 1987 (1.588 and 1.829) than did the respondents from the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (1.074 and 1.362) or the **COMMUNITY** colleges (1.264 and 1.528). While the means for 1990 were significantly larger for all three groups on both variables, the 1990 means were not significantly different among the three groups on both variables. Thus, for both variables, the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities indicated that they were more

Table 2

TYPE * YEAR INTERACTION

	1987		1990		1996	
	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.
*INVOLVEMENT						
Doctoral Granting	1.074	(1.126)	1.818	(1.073)		
Comprehensive	1.588	(1.167)	1.941	(1.028)		
Community College	1.264	(1.167)	1.936	(1.032)		
*UNDERSTANDING						
Doctoral Granting	1.362	(1.129)	2.245	(0.837)		
Comprehensive	1.829	(1.003)	2.370	(0.711)		
Community College	1.528	(1.059)	2.283	(0.793)		
*IMPORTANCE-CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER						
Doctoral Granting	5.956	(2.877)	7.469	(2.212)	5.234	(2.698)
Comprehensive	8.412	(2.156)	8.906	(1.593)	6.941	(2.556)
Community College	6.952	(2.757)	8.488	(1.725)	6.525	(2.847)
*IMPORTANCE-ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR						
Doctoral Granting	7.521	(2.447)	8.716	(1.700)	6.900	(2.745)
Comprehensive	8.876	(1.551)	9.087	(1.359)	7.882	(2.245)
Community College	7.919	(2.486)	9.201	(1.293)	7.450	(2.835)
*IMPORTANCE-DEPARTMENT HEAD						
Doctoral Granting	4.594	(2.453)	6.292	(2.328)	4.588	(2.558)
Comprehensive	5.265	(2.559)	6.824	(2.229)	5.322	(2.401)
Community College	5.919	(2.701)	7.641	(2.185)	5.820	(2.818)
*IMPORTANCE-FACULTY						
Doctoral Granting	3.206	(1.809)	4.410	(1.944)	3.374	(1.946)
Comprehensive	3.632	(1.949)	5.090	(2.109)	3.925	(2.266)
Community College	3.891	(2.137)	5.641	(2.141)	4.458	(2.425)

Figure 1


INVOLVEMENT
2.00
1.90
1.80
1.70
1.60
1.50
1.40
1.30
1.20
1.10
1.00
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
Doctoral
Comprehensive
Community

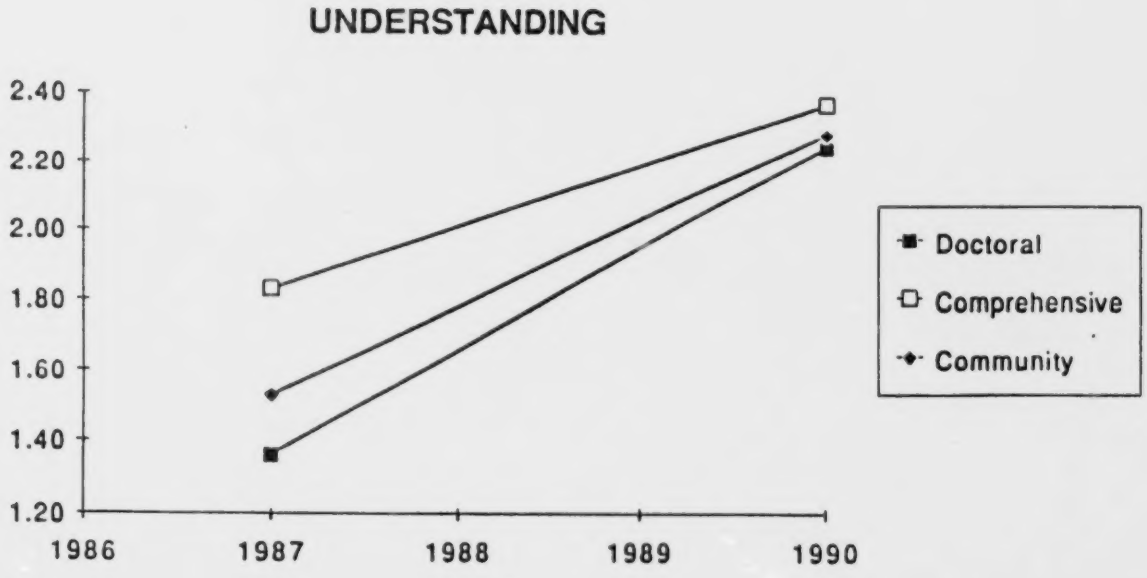

UNDERSTANDING
2.40
2.20
2.00
1.80
1.60
1.40
1.20
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
Doctoral
Comprehensive
Community

Figure 1 continued

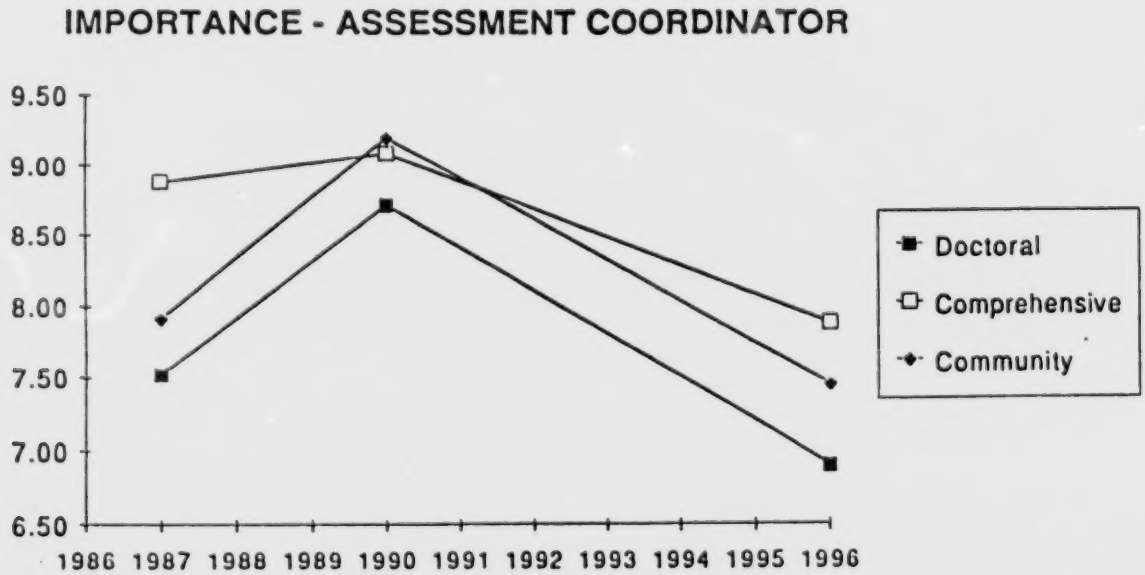
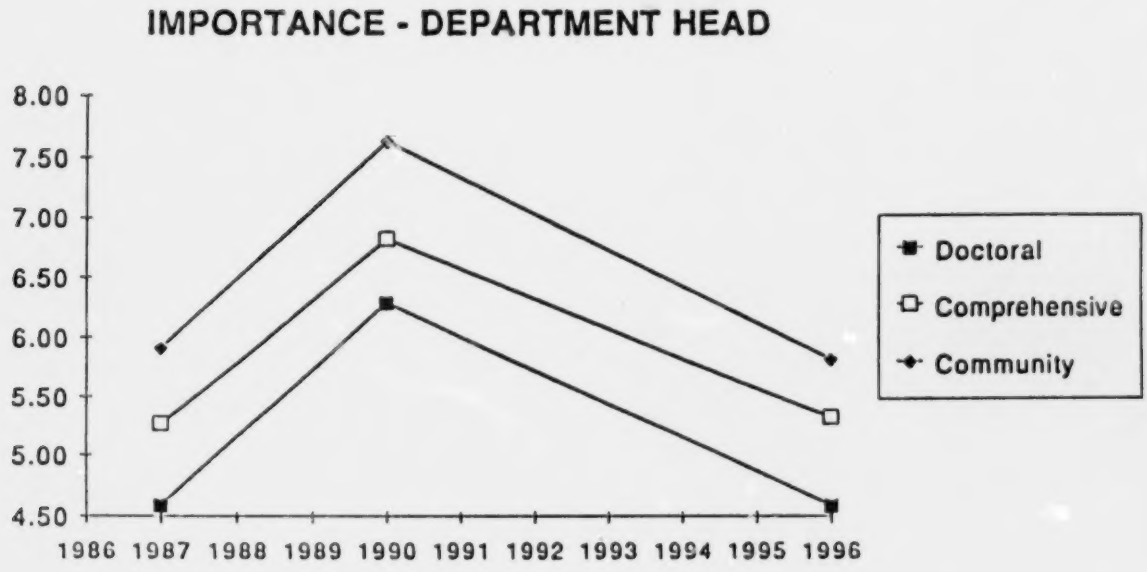
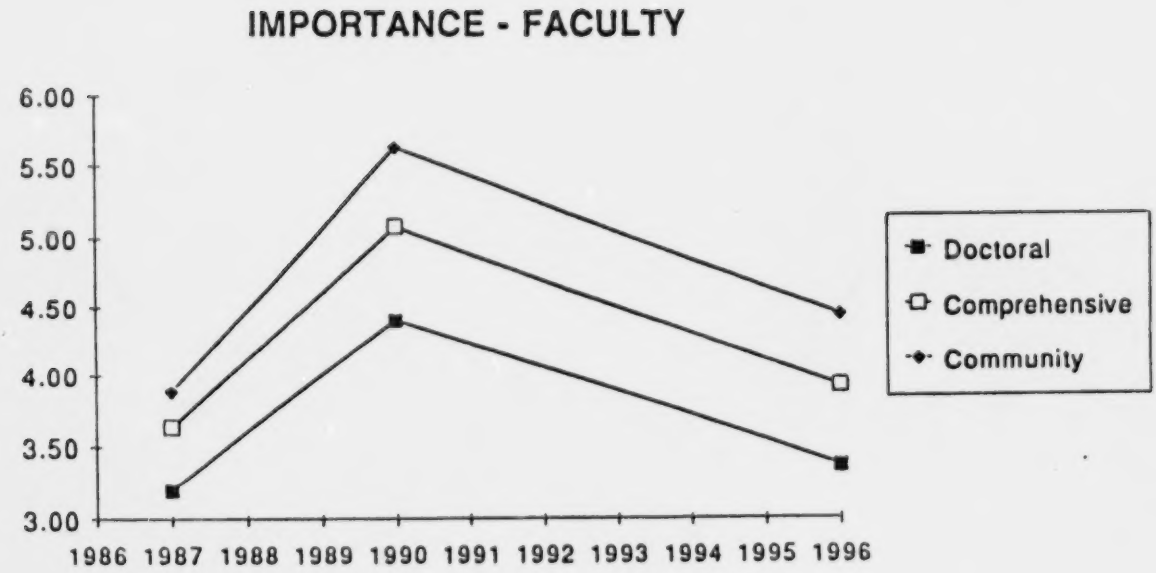


Figure 1 continued





involved in the development of the overall assessment plan and better understood the plan in 1987 than those respondents from the other two types of institutions. However, while all the respondents indicated a significant increase in both the degree of **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** from 1987 to 1990, there were no differences among the three groups on the two variables in 1990.

Now consider the **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect for the dependent variables concerned with the respondents' **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** of the formal outcomes assessment process by the chief academic officer (**IMPCAO**), the assessment coordinator (**IMPAC**), the deans/department heads (**DDH**), and the faculty (**IMPFAC**). The means and standard deviations for these variables are also found in Table 2 (see page 14); the means are also plotted in Figure 1 (pages 16 and 17).

For the perceived importance by the chief academic officer (**IMPCAO**), the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities had a significantly higher mean for 1987 (8.412) than did the respondents from the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (5.956) and the **COMMUNITY** colleges (6.952). For 1990, the means for the perceived importance for all groups were significantly higher than the 1987 means for all groups; the mean for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (7.469) was significantly lower than for the other two groups. These data indicate that the chief academic officers as a total

group were convinced that SCHEV was very serious about the mandate; however, there was not uniformity in the degree of perceived importance. Projecting ahead in time to 1996, the means for all three types of **CAOs** were significantly lower than the 1990 means. Again, the mean for the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (5.234) was significantly lower than for the other two groups. From these data, it is apparent that the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities believed that the chief academic officers at their institutions viewed the assessment process with a higher level of perceived importance than did the respondents from the **COMMUNITY** colleges and the **DOCTORAL** granting universities for 1987 and 1990, as well as projecting ahead to 1996. The perceived importance of the assessment process was always lower for the chief academic officer from the **DOCTORAL** granting universities for all three years.

A similar **TYPE * YEAR** interaction was found for the respondents' perceived importance of the formal assessment process by the assessment coordinator (**AC**). For 1987, the mean for the perceived importance for the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities (8.876) was significantly higher than for **COMMUNITY** colleges (7.919) and **DOCTORAL** granting universities (7.521). While the means for all three types of **ACs** were significantly higher for 1990 than for 1987, the difference

among the means was not statistically significant. Projecting ahead for 1996, the means for all three types of **ACs** were significantly lower than for 1990 with the mean for **DOCTORAL** granting universities (6.900) lower than the **Community** colleges (7.450) and **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities (7.882). As above, the perceived importance by the assessment coordinator was always higher at the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and always lower at the **DOCTORAL** granting universities. These data tend to confirm the fact that, for the most part, the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/ universities had an assessment coordinator in place in 1987. For the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities and the **COMMUNITY** colleges, the assessment coordinators were not employed until later--but were in place by 1990.

The **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by deans/department heads (**IMPDDH**) was different than for the first two **IMPORTANCE** variables discussed above. For all three years, the means for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** for the respondents from the **COMMUNITY** colleges was higher than the means for the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and in turn higher than the means for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. For 1987, there was a significant difference between the means for the **COMMUNITY** colleges (5.919) and the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities

(5.265); both these means were significantly higher than the mean for the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (4.594). For 1990, the means for all three types of **DDHs** were significantly higher than for 1987; for 1996, the means were significantly lower than for 1990. For both 1990 and 1996, the differences among the means were all significant. For these data, it is important to consider the changes from 1987 to 1990 for the three types of institutions. Note that the greatest change in perceived dean/department head importance was for the **COMMUNITY** colleges followed by the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities and then the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities. This differential in the magnitude of the differences is a function of the size and complexity of the types of institutions (i.e., the smaller and less complex community colleges had the greatest change from 1987 to 1990).

The **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by faculty (**IMPFAC**) was different from all the other three **IMPORTANCE** variables. For all three years, the means for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** for the respondents from the **COMMUNITY** colleges was higher than the means for the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and in turn higher than the means for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. For 1987, there was no difference between the means for the **COMMUNITY** colleges (3.891) and the **COMPREHENSIVE**

colleges/universities (3.632); both these means were significantly higher than the mean for the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (3.206). For 1990, the means for all three groups were significantly higher than for 1987; for 1996, the means were significantly lower than for 1990. For both 1990 and 1996, the differences among the means were all significant. For these data, it is important to consider the changes from 1987 to 1990 for the three types of institutions. Note that the greatest change in perceived faculty importance was for the **COMMUNITY** colleges followed by the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and then the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. This differential in the magnitude of the differences, again, is a function of the size and complexity of the types of institutions.

In summary up to this point, inspection of the data in Table 2 reveals that, for all three years, the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the assessment coordinator and the chief academic officer is substantially higher than for the deans/department heads and faculty. The **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** is always lowest for all types of faculty and is always the lowest for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities on all four variables.

Primary Responsibility * Year Interaction

Now consider the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect. This effect was not statistically significant ($p > .05$) for the **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** variables, but was statistically

significant for all four **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** variables ($p < .05$). The means and standard deviations for these variables are found in Table 3 (see page 24); the means are plotted in Figure 2 (see pages 25, 26, and 27).

While the interaction was not significant for either the **INVOLVEMENT** or **UNDERSTANDING** variable, it is interesting to note that for all three groups (administrators, deans/department heads, and faculty), their involvement in the development of the institution's plan and their understanding of it were higher for 1990 than for 1987. For both 1987 and 1990, the administrators (chief academic officers and assessment coordinators) indicated that they were significantly more involved and better understood the assessment project than did the deans/department heads. The deans/department heads, in turn, indicated more involvement and better understanding than did the faculty.

For the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect for the four dependent variables concerned with the respondents' **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** of the formal assessment process by the chief academic officer **(IMPCAO)**, the assessment coordinator **(IMPAC)**, the deans/department heads **(IMPDDH)**, and the faculty **(IMPFAC)**, the patterns are similar for the first two variables **(IMPCAO** and **IMPAC)**; likewise, the patterns are similar for the last two variables **(IMPDDH** and **IMPFAC)**.

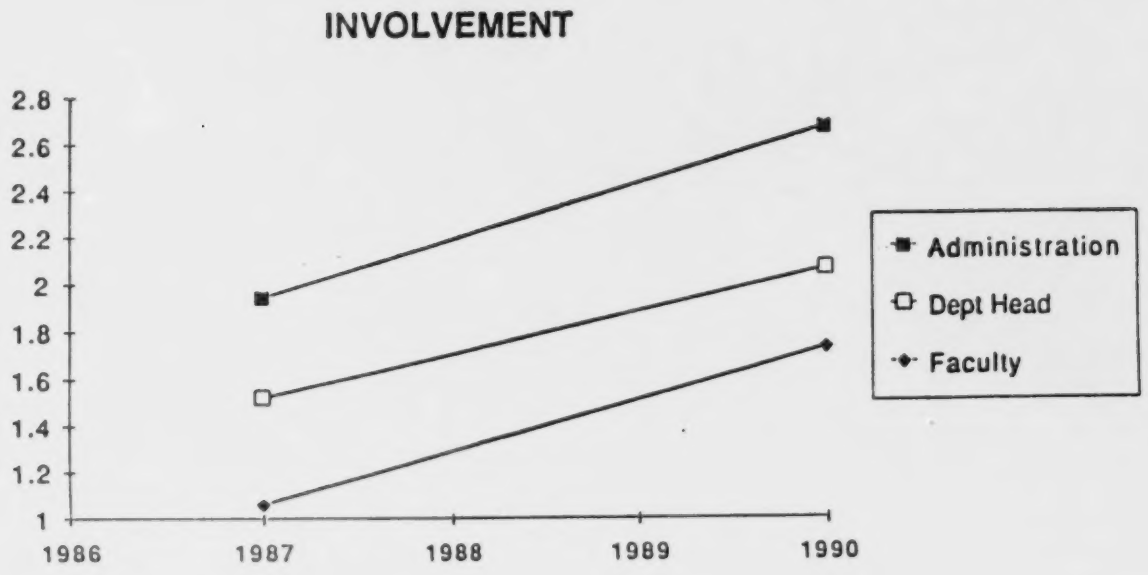
Consider the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the chief academic officer **(IMPCAO)**. For both 1987 and 1990, there were no

TABLE 3

PRIMARY/RESPONSIBILITY * YEAR INTERACTION

	1987		1990		1996	
	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.
*INVOLVEMENT						
Administration	1.946	(1.299)	2.678	(0.681)		
Department Head	1.523	(1.133)	2.070	(0.919)		
Faculty	1.061	(1.111)	1.738	(1.078)		
*UNDERSTANDING						
Administration	2.125	(1.176)	2.847	(0.407)		
Department Head	1.779	(1.052)	2.479	(0.716)		
Faculty	1.343	(1.041)	2.138	(0.817)		
*IMPORTANCE-CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER						
Administration	6.773	(2.963)	8.517	(1.547)	7.218	(2.266)
Department Head	7.090	(2.766)	8.091	(2.244)	6.612	(2.884)
Faculty	6.864	(2.815)	8.284	(1.812)	5.840	(2.839)
*IMPORTANCE-ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR						
Administration	8.242	(1.921)	9.273	(1.130)	8.540	(1.460)
Department Head	8.535	(1.910)	9.127	(1.420)	8.000	(2.452)
Faculty	7.671	(2.561)	8.937	(1.521)	6.857	(2.898)
*IMPORTANCE-DEPARTMENT HEAD						
Administration	4.283	(2.335)	6.877	(1.753)	5.685	(2.401)
Department Head	5.622	(2.514)	7.123	(2.305)	5.698	(2.827)
Faculty	5.425	(2.742)	7.097	(2.390)	5.171	(2.717)
*IMPORTANCE-FACULTY						
Administration	3.222	(2.033)	5.758	(1.857)	4.925	(2.328)
Department Head	3.729	(2.062)	5.205	(2.231)	4.108	(2.474)
Faculty	3.648	(2.016)	5.083	(2.133)	3.892	(2.211)

Figure 2


INVOLVEMENT
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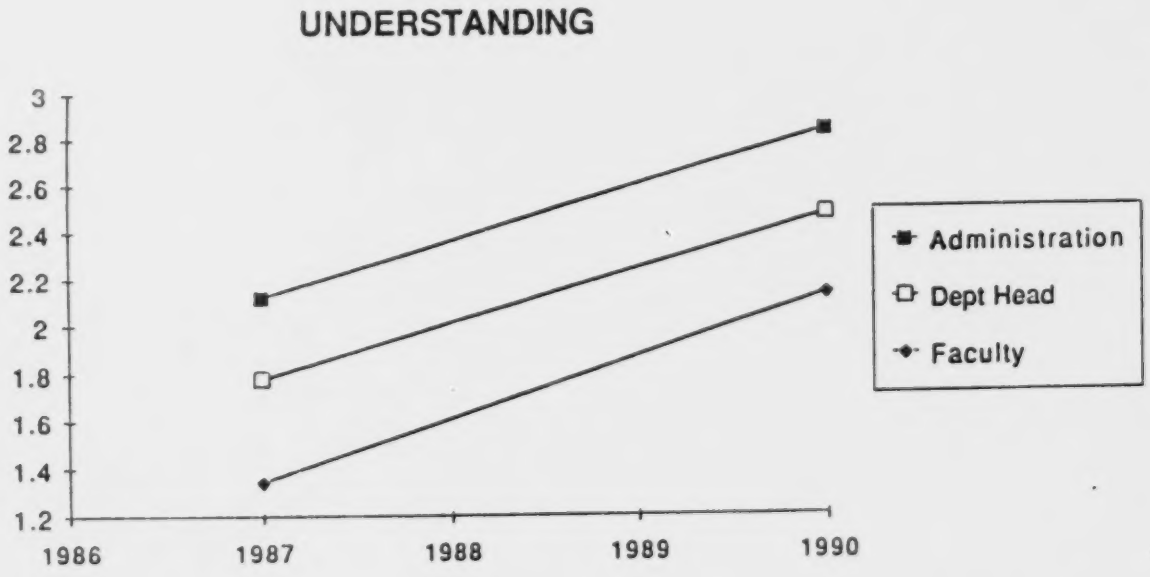
UNDERSTANDING
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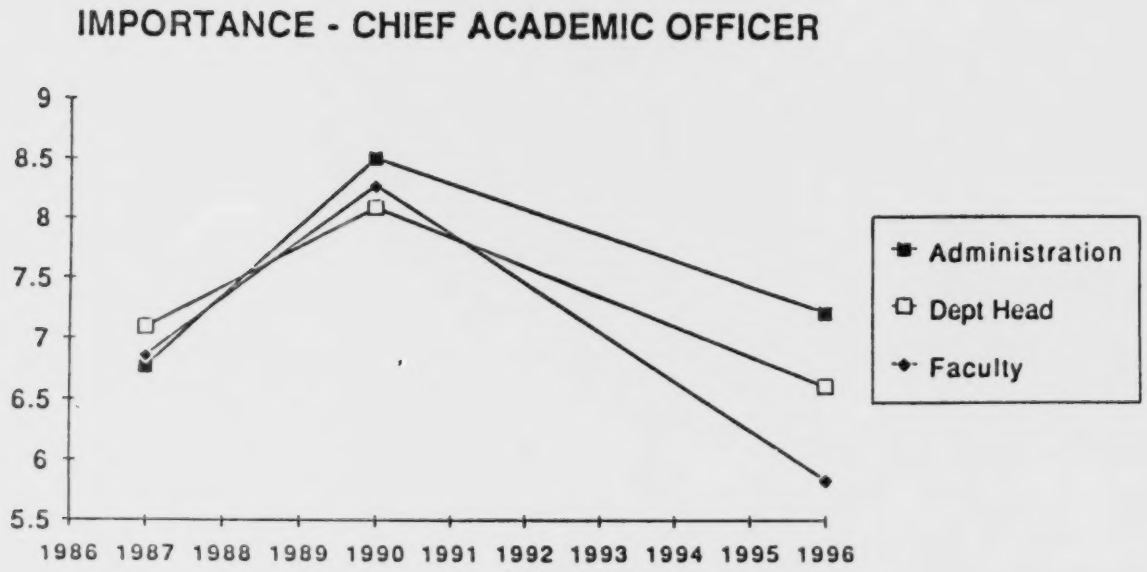
Figure 2 continued



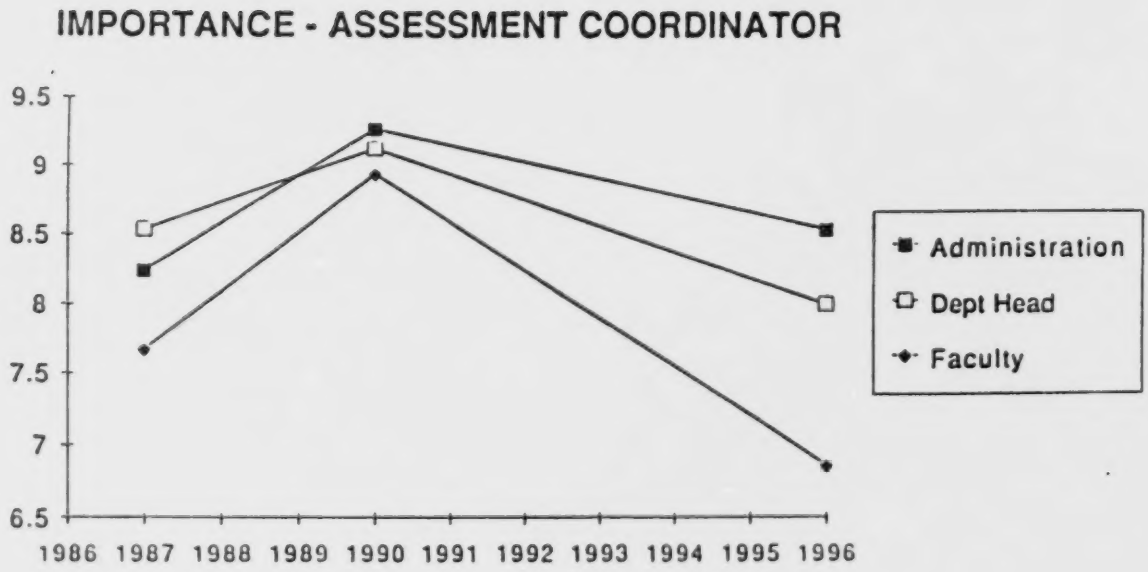
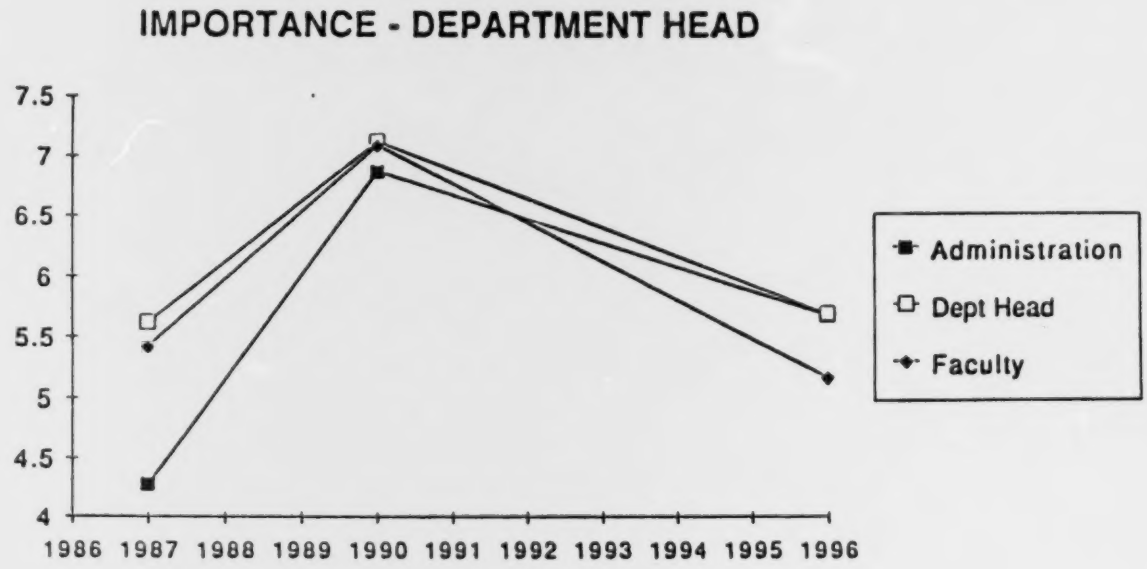
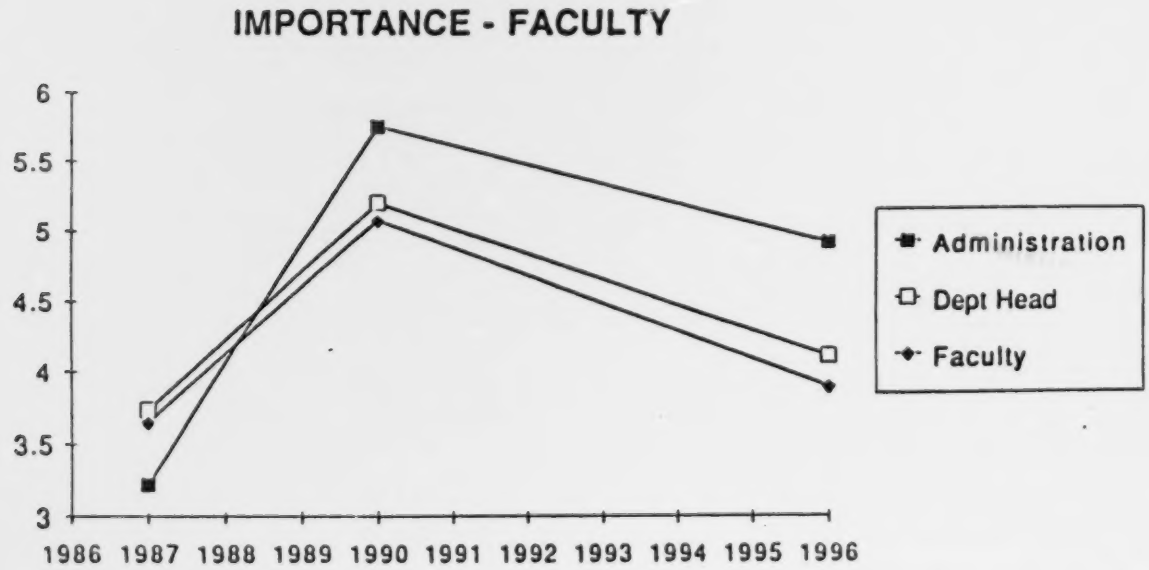


Figure 2 continued





differences among the means for the three groups. However, projecting ahead for 1996, the mean for the administrators (7.218) was significantly higher than the mean for the deans/department heads (6.612) which, in turn, was significantly higher than the mean for the faculty (5.840). These data indicate that both the administrators and the deans/department heads expect the importance given to assessment by the chief academic officer to decline for 1996. More importantly, the faculty expect the importance given to assessment by the chief academic officer to decline even more.

Regarding the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect for the dependent variable concerned with the respondents' **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the assessment coordinators **(IMPAC)**, there was a significant difference for 1987 between the mean for faculty respondents (7.671) and both the administrators (8.242) and the deans/department heads (8.535). That is, the faculty had a lower perception of the importance given to the overall assessment program by the assessment coordinator than did the other two groups. For 1990, there were no differences among the group means for the three groups. However, projecting ahead to 199[illegible] the mean for the administrators (8.540) was significantly higher than for the deans/department heads (8.000), which, in turn, was higher than for the faculty (6.857). Again, these data indicate that, while both the administrators and deans/department heads

would expect the importance given to assessment by the assessment coordinator to decline in 1996, the faculty would expect an even larger decline.

The data for the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect for both the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the deans/department heads **(IMPDDH)** and the faculty **(IMPFAC)** can be considered together. For 1987, for both variables, administrators had a significantly lower perception of the importance given to assessment by the deans/department heads (4.283) and by the faculty (3.222) than did the deans/department heads (5.622 and 3.729) and the faculty (5.425 and 3.648). These data again confirm that the administrators (chief academic officers and assessment coordinators) had been more involved in planning the assessment program, had a better understanding of the process, and, thus, had lower expectations for deans/department heads and faculty in 1987 regarding assessment. For the variable **IMPDDH**, in 1990, there were no differences among the means for the three groups, but the change for the administrators was greater than for the other two groups (4.283 to 6.877) indicating that their expectations increased as the deans/department heads became more involved in the process. Note for the variable, **IMPFAC**, this increase from 1987 to 1990 (3.222 to 5.758) in perceived importance by the faculty was even greater, indicating an even greater expectation for faculty involvement. These data tend to

illustrate that the administrators are really hoping that the faculty will begin to assume ownership for assessment. The 1996 data, however, also tend to illustrate that without external requirements these administrators, along with deans/department heads and faculty, foresee a substantial decline in perceived importance from 1990 levels.

Summary of Part I

At this point, the quantitative data indicate that the chief academic officers and the assessment coordinators had been more involved in the development of the institution's assessment plan, better understood the process, and had a higher perceived importance than did the deans/department heads or the faculty. While this pattern was consistent for all three types of institutions, the involvement, understanding, and importance were higher for the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and **COMMUNITY** colleges than for the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. Most critically, however, is the decrease in the perceived importance given to assessment by the respondents from 1990 to 1996. These quantitative data are further explored and reinforced in the following discussion of the qualitative findings of this study.

PART II: Qualitative Data Analyses of Research Question #2

Written comments from 509 of the 810 returned mailed-questionnaires and oral statements from 67 follow-up interviews were often lengthy. In 43 cases, additional pages of comments,

copies of articles that supported various positions, and copies of campus assessment newsletters, memos, and reports accompanied returned mailed-questionnaires or were received during interviews. Cross-referencing and cross-validating over 300 pages of notes led to the determination that roughly 70% of all comments contained common concerns, criticisms, praises, or mixtures of all three. All findings in the following subsections have been presented in the order of, first, negative viewpoints, second, positive viewpoints, and finally, mixed viewpoints and concerns.

For purposes of this paper, the following analyses of factors common across all types and groups serve as an answer to Research Question #2:

> What critical factors (i.e., organizations, individuals, attitudes, beliefs, activities, procedures, instruments, etc.) have influenced administrator and faculty perceptions of the importance of formal outcomes assessment across all institutions being studied?

A common factor was one that had to be voiced by at least 50% of all commenters from each type of institution and personnel group. Eight common factors emerged from the data and have been presented in descending order of frequency.

SCHEV's Role

Over 90% of all commenters spoke of the role that the State Council of Higher Education has played in initiating and sustaining Virginia's assessment efforts thus far.

Approximately 25% of these individuals, fairly evenly distributed across type and group, referred to SCHEV's role in strong negative language. Typical words and phrases included "SCHEV threats," "edits," "intrusions," "just another SCHEV fad," "another ridiculous educational fad created by bureaucrats and politicians who have nothing better to do," and "another example of centralized authority trying to standardize higher education." Activities and reports were criticized as "meaningless busy work," and others said SCHEV had "alienated" administrators and faculty.

Approximately 5% of this overall 90% referred to SCHEV's role in strong positive language. SCHEV's "reasonable attitudes," "flexibility," "persistence in encouraging faculty involvement," "praise" of specific assessment activities, "national leadership," and "dedication" were cited.

Approximately 70% of this 90%, fairly evenly distributed across type and group, referred to SCHEV's role with mixed evaluations. Whether beginning with negative descriptors such as "inconvenient," "unrealistic," "unreasonable" reporting requirements or with more neutral, matter-of-fact terms such as "SCHEV's mandate," "requirements," "criteria," or "guidelines," most of these commenters went on to talk about how outcomes assessment was "important," "a sound idea," and "something we should do if we aren't already doing it." Referring to reporting

deadlines, phrases such as "frustrating" and "much less than full faculty involvement" were frequently followed by sentiments such as "necessary but difficult external reporting requirements." "Early confusion and frustration" were generally attributed to SCHEV's "lack of direction," "vagueness," and "ambiguity," but others concluded that perhaps SCHEV was not completely at fault. As one doctoral-granting university department head surmised,

> The process had to start somewhere, and I believe that perhaps SCHEV had communicated more than many of us were told in 1987. I can't believe this just suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Maybe some of our people knew that it was coming but just ignored it or felt they would save us the trouble by dealing with it themselves. That's happened before.

Whatever the cause, according to many of these observers, the resulting initial distrust shaped negative faculty attitudes and "never gave assessment a chance to prove its worth."

Over half of those who criticized SCHEV's "early difficulties," however, concluded that by 1990 "some progress has been made." They praised SCHEV's more recent efforts "to involve more faculty in conferences and workshops" and to send out "people to talk to our administrators and faculty." In all, SCHEV's pressure was generally credited as being both the critical factor driving assessment in Virginia thus far and, at the same time, the reason faculty initially have been nonsupportive. As one senior humanities faculty member from a comprehensive college observed,

> Top-down required activities have been conducted and

> reports have been submitted. In 1987, SCHEV wanted assessment. I suppose by now a few administrators and faculty in a few places really want it too, but my guess is that it's still SCHEV's game in 1990."

The findings of the quantitative data of this study specifically referring to "Faculty In General" would seem to validate this last observation.

SACS' Requirements

Over 75% of all commenters referred to "SACS requirements," "SACS criteria." or "SACS self-study guidelines." No one referred to SACS before referring to SCHEV, except when considering a future without SCHEV requirements. Typical administrator responses were "SACS will always require assessment even if SCHEV drops its reporting requirement" and "SACS requirements are here to stay, and we all had better get used to that fact."

All comments about SACS tended to be matter-of-fact, and commenters cited three reasons. SACS was too far removed; SACS accreditation was needed and desired; and SACS intruded only once every ten years.

Chief Academic Officer's Role

Over 65% of all commenters referred to their Provost or Dean as an important factor. Comments referred to commitment, involvement, and understanding.

Approximately 40% of this 65% spoke negatively. "Lack of leadership" was often followed by such statements as "no one on

campus has ever heard or has rarely ever heard him mention the subject"; "I'm not sure how she feels about it"; and "as long as he doesn't have to do anything about it but sign off on the report, he doesn't care."

Approximately another 40% spoke positively, using terms such as "visible," "vocal," "creative," and "knowledgeable." These CAOs had defined assessment as "a top priority," "an integral part of our every day work," and "a set of benefits rather than processes."

Two additional observations emerged. First, turnover among CAOs often meant momentum had to be regained. Second, committed CAOs selected equally committed assessment coordinators but "worked hard" to continue to be seen as the "driving force" for assessment on their campuses.

Assessment Coordinator's Effectiveness

Similar to the CAO factor, approximately 65% of all commenters referred to assessment coordinators.

In contrast to the 40% negative CAO reaction, only about 15% of these commenters spoke negatively and appeared to address one coordinator at a doctoral-granting institution, two at comprehensive institutions, and two at community colleges. These individuals were described as "uninterested," "the weak link," "going through the motions," and "naive."

Over 75% of this 65% spoke positively, using such terms as "committed," "knowledgeable," "competent," "caring, "and "hard working." Eight coordinators were cited as "respected senior faculty." Effective coordinators "shared faculty concerns," "gave good advice about procedures and tests," "set a pace we could live with," "kept us well informed," and "held committee meetings to a minimum." Coordinator updates, newsletters, reports, presentations before all faculty, and "day to day cooperation" were especially appreciated.

Three additional observations emerged. First, in 1987-88 apparently at least two colleges in each of the four-year types and eleven community colleges either had no assessment coordinator or at least he or she was not well known. Administrators and faculty felt "in the dark" and " many assumed that assessment must not really be that important." Second, the turnover rate appeared to be high. Over 30% of all institutions have had more than one coordinator since 1987-88. Third, commenters especially appreciated coordinators in 1990 because they provided essential clerical and technical support.

Limited Resources

As the fifth most frequently mentioned factor, "lack of resources" was referred to by approximately 60% of all commenters. No one spoke positively about the three concerns that emerged: time, money, and allocation/reallocation

uncertainty.

The most frequent negative comment was that assessment was a "waste of time," figuratively and literally. Typical phrases relating time and working conditions were "I'm already overloaded just with heavy class loads and research" and "I have no time left for anything other than preparing for classes, teaching classes, grading exams and papers, conferencing with students, attending committee meetings, and preparing for classes again." Planning, implementing, interpreting data, and determining curriculum and teaching changes were seen as important, but formalizing these activities and externally reporting was "paper shuffling," and "not an essential part of the assessment process but the part that [has taken] the most time and effort."

A science professor at a doctoral-granting institution spoke to "the heart of this issue" when he said,

> Assessment is an unnecessary formal analysis of what we already informally know but can do little about without more release time, more space and equipment, more staff, in short, more money.

Others asked such questions as "How could assessment have been perceived as so important in 1987 when so little funding was provided for staff and materials and no money was provided for faculty release time?" Others "doubted" assessment's "long term viability" and "chances for survival," given recent higher education funding cuts.

One final concern about resources related to

allocation/reallocation of funds. SCHEV has consistently said funding should not be tied to outcomes, but many commenters worried that SCHEV's position might change. Further, some feared that should institutional funding be decreased in the 1990s, institutions themselves might begin reallocating funds based on assessment results. A department head at a comprehensive institution perhaps best described one important underlying uncertainty:

> Would a department having poorer results lose funding or ironically would it receive an increase to help "pull itself up"? Is it possible that a department having better results might be "punished" rather than rewarded? In either case, data originally designed to be "non-threatening" would, in fact, be quite threatening to either department.

In short, the issues of time, money, and future uses of data have continued to be important arguments working against wide-spread support for assessment. Few expected administrator and faculty support to increase until funding increased, and no one seemed to know when that might be.

Valuable Results

Nearly 60% of all commenters cited the importance of "useable results" to generate campus support. In sharp contrast to the factor of resources, roughly 80% of these commenters spoke hopefully about the potential for results to convince skeptical faculty. They spoke of the "utility of the data" and the "value of the data" offsetting the "trouble and expense of collecting

it." They went on to say that results had to produce "workable," "visible," "practical," "positive" changes in student, faculty and administrator behavior. In short, results had to produce "valuable" and "significant" improvements in curriculum and teaching, or assessment would "be forgotten by the mid 1990s."

Many professional and vocational/technical program personnel stated that they had been conducting assessment activities for many years. Engineering and Nursing administrators and faculty, for example, were quick to point out that their certification exams and employer/graduate surveys had "consistently yielded valuable results" which frequently led to "significant modifications." They argued that for their programs, "SCHEV's requirements have had little meaning. We didn't start assessing because of SCHEV, and we won't stop when they get tired of filing away reports." Many of these same professional and vocational/technical commenters wondered if results would "lead to important improvements in the Arts and Sciences." While many felt it was time for "the other side" (i.e., liberal arts) to become "accountable," few were convinced that Arts and Sciences faculty would ever accept assessment as an integral part of their programs.

Educating Administrators and Faculty
(Communication, Involvement, and Knowledge)

The factors of communication, involvement, and knowledge

were so frequently mentioned together that commenters appeared to be seeing them as one integrated factor. Only rarely was one mentioned without the other two being mentioned in immediately following statements. Nearly 55% of all commenters spoke of the importance of "educating and involving more and more faculty" if faculty ownership and the "institutionalizing of assessment" were to occur.

As might be expected, no one spoke against the value of communication, involvement, and knowledge regarding assessment, but roughly half of this 55% criticized SCHEV, their CAO, their assessment coordinator, or their division/department head for "poorly communicating," "not encouraging involvement," or "not knowing much about assessment himself." While committee work was often seen as "despised by faculty," it was also seen as "an effective way to both educate and involve at the same time." Commenters spoke of the importance of SCHEV presentations before committees and whole faculties at institutions and suggested SCHEV needed to continue this practice. Commenters noted that administrators and faculty needed to know more about "the history of assessment, especially assessment in Virginia," "how SCHEV arrived at the 'need' for assessment," "just what was this 'need,'" and "how would 'letting everybody do their own thing' satisfy this 'need.'" Some commenters took a more aggressive stand similar to that found in the following comment made by a

social science faculty member at a community college:

> From its beginning assessment has been seen as a tool of administrators and SCHEV. As long as that impression exists, the faculty will never see their ownership as anything but an illusion being encouraged to conceal the "real" uses of the data.

These critics stressed that "first impressions" were difficult to change and that communication and involvement arising from in-service workshops and state, regional, and national conferences would lead to "more knowledgeable faculty" who would assume "control" of assessment. "Assessment has important potentials," they argued, but "the data, interpreting it, and actually changing curriculum and instruction all have to be under the direct control of the faculty." For many, current external reporting requirements only sustained "first impressions." In fact, over 30% referred to external reporting beyond the department level as "threatening," "unnecessary," and "counterproductive."

Intrinsic Value of Assessment

Perhaps the most positive factor mentioned by over 50% of all commenters was the concept of assessment itself. While external reporting requirements seemed to represent a barrier to full campus support for assessment activities, virtually no one questioned the intrinsic worth of assessment. Many referred to it as a "sound idea," "an idea whose time has come," and "an idea no professional educator can ever ignore." Others simply echoed

SCHEV's phrase that it was "a means to improve curriculum and instruction." Individuals from professional and vocational/technical disciplines emphasized that they had always performed outcomes assessment because it was "an excellent concept." Still others spoke of how assessment "heightened awareness of student learning rather than faculty teaching." Many spoke of their desire to "keep students first and do the best we can do to help them learn." Others commented on the importance of "continuous feedback" and of "accountability to students, parents, employers, graduate schools, and the community."

About 20% of these very positive commenters, however, felt that the intrinsic value of assessment had already been overshadowed by the negative attitudes regarding external reporting. While reporting "might be a necessary mechanism" to "protect" an "excellent concept" from being "pushed aside by tight budgets and 'greater' needs," many hoped that faculty could eventually ignore "other people looking at the data." One community college assessment coordinator perhaps best expressed this optimism shared by this small group of avid supporters:

> External reporting to the VCCS, SCHEV, or SACS is a fact that is not going to change. My hope and prediction is that assessment will become somewhat less of an administrative priority and more of a faculty owned enterprise, as more and more academic departments steadily become more closely involved. As it becomes more pervasive and routine--institutionalized--as a regular part of curriculum development, I predict its perceived importance may diminish while its actual

importance grows.

Summary of Part II

From eight common factors, a variety of fears, concerns, and hopes emerged. While SCHEV and SACS were clearly seen as the two external forces responsible for "initial assessment successes," SCHEV "top-down pressures," especially its reporting requirements, were also seen as the main reason faculty in general seemed to resist "giving assessment a chance." Campus academic leadership was viewed more positively, and the effectiveness of assessment coordinators was highly rated. Time, money, and "threatening" resource allocation/reallocation concerns were also seen as continuing barriers to wide-spread campus support. While initial results were promising, subsequent important changes in curriculum and teaching were seen as critical for long term faculty support, and as one commenter observed, "It is just too early to tell if important improvements will occur. By the mid-1990s, we should know one way or the other."

Hopes for educating and involving larger numbers of administrators and faculty were supported by the fact that so many commenters stressed the intrinsic value of assessment. Approximately 25% hoped that SCHEV "would keep the pressure on" because "assessment was long overdue." Others hoped it would "eventually succeed," "finally be understood as sound and

important," and "ultimately be faculty controlled." Still others hoped that "the benefits [would] make believers."

CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, perhaps at least four conclusions might be drawn from all data thus far. First, while chief academic officers and assessment coordinators saw themselves and were seen by deans/department heads and faculty as more supportive of formal outcomes assessment, these administrators saw (or perhaps hoped for) an important increase in deans/department head and faculty support from 1987 to 1990. While deans/department heads and faculty likewise saw an increase in support from all four groups in 1990, they still did not see themselves as strongly supporting formal assessment in 1990. They further predicted a substantial decline in their support if external pressures were removed.

Second, across all groups, types, and years, faculty were the least supportive of assessment, and the least supportive of all types of faculty were those from doctoral-granting universities. Perhaps the depth of their negative feelings might best be captured in a statement from one doctoral-granting arts and sciences faculty member: "The state can kiss my assessment."

Third, common factors seemed to be more negative than positive, and the most important factors were forces external to the institutions. This negativism would seem to confirm and to

be supported by the quantitative findings presented in this paper.

Finally, with the exception of roughly a dozen individuals, neither the negativism nor positivism was extreme. Since most respondents and commenters seemed to give low-to-moderate involvement, understanding, and importance ratings, as well as mixed comments, perhaps the most accurate overall conclusion that could be drawn from an analysis of these quantitative and qualitative data in 1990 is that a majority of respondents who have been involved in assessment activities for at least one year feel that administrators and faculty in general remain skeptical about the importance and future of formal outcomes assessment, at least as it is being applied in Virginia. In short, growth in administrator and faculty support has occurred by 1990, but such growth does not represent full "ownership."

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Appendices

Appendix #1

SUMMARY ANOVA

Dependent Variable - - Involvement

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	17.058	2	8.529	5.82	0.0031
PRI/RESP	115.670	2	57.835	39.45	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP	3.451	4	0.863	0.59	0.6710
ERROR#1	1153.674	787	1.466		
YEAR	163.952	1	163.952	203.71	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	7.061	2	3.531	4.39	0.0128
PRI/RESP*YEAR	1.205	2	0.603	0.75	0.4734
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	4.777	4	1.194	1.48	0.2052
ERROR#2	616.505	766	0.805		

Dependent Variable - - Understanding

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	13.524	2	6.762	6.27	0.0020
PRI/RESP	87.749	2	43.875	40.68	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP	5.701	4	1.425	1.32	0.2602
ERROR#1	847.744	786	1.079		
YEAR	288.769	1	288.769	394.70	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	5.277	2	2.639	4.55	0.0108
PRI/RESP*YEAR	0.898	2	0.449	0.77	0.4612
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	6.739	4	1.685	2.91	0.0210
ERROR#2	442.816	764	0.580		

Appendix #1 Continued

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Chief Academic Officer)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	616.233	2	308.117	26.87	0.0001
PRI/RESP	43.771	2	21.885	1.91	0.1491
TYPE*PRI/RESP	13.853	4	3.463	0.30	0.8766
ERROR#1	7533.188	4	3.463		
YEAR	1203.857	2	601.928	300.89	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	69.949	4	17.487	8.74	0.0001
PRI/RESP*YEAR	94.193	4	23.548	11.77	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	46.352	8	5.794	2.90	0.0034
ERROR#2	1866.481	933	2.001		

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Assessment Coordinator)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	148.056	2	74.028	9.57	0.001
PRI/RESP	212.951	2	106.475	13.77	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP	17.961	4	4.490	0.58	0.6768
ERROR#1	5135.921	664	7.735		
YEAR	846.733	2	423.366	176.06	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	44.289	4	11.072	4.60	0.0011
PRI/RESP*YEAR	81.745	4	20.436	8.50	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	23.718	8	2.965	1.23	0.2762
ERROR#2	2260.347	940	2.405		

Appendix #1 Continued

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Dean/Department Head)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	609.756	2	304.878	23.88	0.0001
PRI/RESP	35.022	2	17.511	1.37	0.2544
TYPE*PRI/RESP	91.551	4	22.888	1.79	0.1288
ERROR#1	9129.824	715	12.769		
YEAR	1244.950	2	622.475	317.25	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	14.550	4	3.637	1.85	0.1163
PRI/RESP*YEAR	72.392	4	18.098	9.22	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	18.920	8	2.365	1.21	0.2921
ERROR#2	2172.021	1107	1.962		

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Faculty in General)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	395.922	2	197.961	21.11	0.0001
PRI/RESP	38.274	2	19.137	2.04	0.1306
TYPE*PRI/RESP	26.342	4	6.585	0.70	0.5905
ERROR#1	6807.230	726	9.376		
YEAR	850.714	2	425.357	273.13	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	22.638	4	5.659	3.63	0.0060
PRI/RESP*YEAR	46.195	4	11.549	7.42	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	2.469	8	0.309	0.20	0.9911
ERROR#2	1901.483	1221	1.557		

THE ASSESSMENT MANDATES: HOW PERVASIVE ARE THEY?

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INTRODUCTION

Efforts to more closely oversee and obtain information on the nature and quality of the process and product of higher education predate the founding of the American republic (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976; Herbst, 1982). The current public interest in assessment of student learning and outcomes in higher education can be traced more specifically to growing uncertainty in recent decades about the quality of the product of American higher education. It is clear that the push to assess has been fueled by the concerns of government officials, business leaders, and critics both within and outside higher education that undergraduates receive their degrees in spite of relatively low levels of skill and knowledge, and that the undergraduate curriculum is fragmented and incoherent (Association of American Colleges, 1985; Bennett, 1984; Bloom, 1982; Bonham, 1980; Ewell, 1989; Hacker, 1986; Hartle, 1986; Jaschik, 1985; Lawrence & Green, 1980; National Governor's Association, 1986; Southern Regional Education Board, 1985). "Loss of confidence" in higher education on the parts of state officials has been found to be an important factor in spurring the development of current state assessment policies (Ewell, 1989). In spite of such concerns, in most states officials have been reluctant to dictate to colleges and universities how to address these issues, and have held institutions themselves largely responsible for planning and

conducting assessment and then determining what to do based on their findings (Aper, 1989; Ewell, 1989; Fox, 1989; Hillman, 1989; Krech, 1989).

Political leaders have embraced assessment as a means of asking colleges and universities to demonstrate concretely the value of what they do, and to use what they find to improve their practice. This information is in turn expected to help policy makers evaluate and justify large public expenditures on higher education. A number of researchers have observed that policy-makers and state higher education officials often appear to view new assessment requirements as a way to infuse new life into a somnolent patient, a way to force higher education to reexamine itself, be more responsive, and make adjustments as it moves toward the twenty-first century (Alfred and Weissman, 1988; Astin, 1985; Bennett, 1985; Bennett & Peltason, 1985; Coombs, 1985; Delattre, 1988; Ewell, 1984; Ewell 1985a; Ewell, 1987a; Hogarth, 1987; Newman, 1985; Sanchez, 1987; Wagner, 1989).

Research on the assessment movement has largely focused on policy development, implementation, and expectations (Aper, 1989; Ewell,1989,1990). This study addressed a different question, namely, have state assessment policies diffused through the administrative and instructional fabric of public higher education. Specifically, this question focused on four groups of actors within institutions: chief academic officers,

institutional assessment coordinators, academic department heads, and faculty. The questions for each of these groups related to their relative levels of involvement in the development and revision of their institution's and department's assessment plans; their understanding of the purpose and application of assessment activities; and their support for outcomes assessment (i.e., the degree to which they would approve of and support assessment activities on their campus regardless of external mandates or reporting requirements). Additionally, data were sought to help explain what factors have been important in developing broad based administrative and faculty involvement in, understanding of, and support for assessment. Where have such attitudes and actions been generated? Do these factors vary by type of institution? What have been the critical factors influencing the perceptions of administrators and faculty as to the importance of outcomes assessment? In short what factors have tended to limit the wide-spread adoption of assessment as policy and practice or conversely, to promote it?

Assessment has been formal state policy in Virginia for almost four years. In that time, it has been made abundantly clear that both state officials and institutional proponents of assessment believe that for assessment to be meaningful as a catalyst for improvement in higher education, "ownership" of the process must be assumed by campus administrators and faculty.

Until now there has been no systematic research to ascertain the degree to which such acceptance has indeed occurred on college and university campuses.

RATIONAL FOR THE STUDY

Virginia's tradition of institutional autonomy in higher education underscores the assumption that assessment activities will flourish to the degree that they are accepted as part of the culture of the institution (Miller, 1989). Virginia, like many states that have followed it into the assessment arena, has emphasized local initiative, but that does not overshadow the fact that the mandate to do assessment was a "top-down" directive from authorities external to the institution. State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) officials have sought to cultivate support for assessment by focusing on two groups of college and university personnel: chief academic officers and assessment coordinators. By 1989-90, SCHEV officials have been discussing outcomes assessment for almost five years with college and university presidents through the General Professional Advisory Committee (GPAC) (composed of institutions' presidents), and with chief academic officers through the Instructional Programs Advisory Committee (IPAC). Based on 1989 annual progress reports to SCHEV from all Virginia public colleges and universities, state higher education officials concluded that many college and university chief academic officers are beginning

to recognize the potential benefits of outcomes assessment for their institutions (Miller, 1989).

While chief academic officers have served as formal liaisons between their institutions and SCHEV through IPAC, it has been the institutional assessment coordinators who have received the most concentrated attention from SCHEV officials and who have, in turn, been directly responsible for overseeing most institutional work completed. Prior to 1986-87, only James Madison University among Virginia colleges and universities had an explicit assessment plan, although at many institutions, informal assessment activities had generally been conducted by offices of institutional research. In 1986-87, at many institutions, personnel from Institutional Research received the responsibility of guiding the development of formal institutional assessment plans. Once the role of assessment coordinator was delineated on many campuses in 1987-88, this coordinator became the focus for SCHEV officials to begin the process of involving institutional division/department heads and faculty. Statewide annual outcomes assessment workshops and conferences, as well as one-on-one working sessions, have been the primary approaches SCHEV officials have used to educate and encourage these new actors in the unfolding assessment effort. From 1988 on, SCHEV officials began encouraging faculty to attend these workshops and conferences.

Since 1985, then, SCHEV officials have promoted assessment and have sought to facilitate exchanges of practical knowledge about campus assessment between chief academic officers and assessment coordinators of Virginia's public colleges and universities. In turn, SCHEV has relied upon these institutional officers to communicate effectively expectations for and methods to conduct assessment. In so doing, SCHEV officials have sought indirectly, to positively influence division/department head and faculty involvement in, understanding of, and support for assessment. SCHEV officials have operated on the assumption that through the creation of campus-wide division/department-specific committees intended to plan and help implement assessment procedures, assessment coordinators and division/department heads have over time introduced progressively larger segments of the faculty to outcomes assessment (Miller, 1989).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given that formal outcomes assessment activities have been conducted at all public colleges and universities in Virginia since at least 1987, it was anticipated that some evidence of the degree to which administrators and faculty have begun taking ownership of their institution's assessment activities could be found. Given this assumption, the purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to investigate the pervasiveness of administrator and faculty involvement in, understanding of, and support for

outcomes assessment in Virginia's public colleges and universities; and (2) to explore critical factors influencing administrator and faculty support of outcomes assessment.

METHODS

Two data collection strategies were used. The first involved a broad-based mailed-questionnaire designed primarily to collect quantitative data to address the initial concern of the study--pervasiveness of perceived involvement, understanding, and importance of formal outcomes assessment. The second involved follow-up interviews of selected administrators and faculty from two **COMMUNITY** colleges, two **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities, and two **DOCTORAL**-granting universities.

The mailed-questionnaire was designed to produce quantitative data to answer Research Question #1. A short version was distributed to all chief academic officers (**CAO**) and assessment coordinators (**AC**); a longer version contained additional questions and was distributed to a representative sample of deans/department heads (**DDH**) and faculty (**FAC**) of departments which had been involved in a campus assessment program during at least the 1988-89 and/or 1989-90 academic years. Both versions were distributed in March 1990 to administrators and faculty at 37 state-supported **DOCTORAL**-granting universities (n = 6), **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/ universities (n = 8), and **COMMUNITY** colleges (n = 23) in

Virginia.

All respondents were asked to indicate their degree of **INVOLVEMENT** in the development of their institution's overall assessment plan in both 1987 and 1990. Possible responses were 0 = none; 1 = low; 2 = moderate; and 3 = high. The respondents were also asked to indicate their degree of **UNDERSTANDING** of their institution's assessment plan in both 1987 and 1990. Possible responses were again 0 = none; 1 = low; 2 = moderate; and 3 = high. Finally, each respondent was asked to indicate the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** of the formal outcomes assessment process in 1987, 1990, and 1996 for each the following individuals/groups:

1. chief academic officers
2. assessment coordinators
3. deans/department heads
4. faculty

Possible responses ranged from 1 = low to 10 = high. The **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** for 1996 was a prediction based on the following hypothetical condition: "Suppose by 1996, SCHEV no longer required official outcomes assessment."

The design for this portion of the study was a three-factor within-subjects design with repeated measures on one factor. The three factors were 1) Institution Type; 2) Primary Responsibility; and 3) Year (the repeated measure). Due to the fact that the chief academic officer and the assessment coordinator were primarily responsible for the initial planning and development of the institutional assessment plan and to the

fact that there could be only one respondent of each type from each institution, these two categories were combined into one category called administration (**ADM**). The data were analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS Version 5.128). Separate analyses were conducted for each of the six dependent variables:

1. respondent's involvement
   1987 and 1990 only
2. respondent's understanding
   1987 and 1990 only
3. respondent's perception of importance by **CAO**
   1987, 1990, and 1996
4. respondent's perception of importance by **AC**
   1987, 1990, and 1996
5. respondent's perception of importance by **DDH**
   1987, 1990, and 1996
6. respondent's perception of importance by **FAC**
   1987, 1990, and 1996

The second data collection strategy, personal interviewing, was conducted to confirm findings from the mailed-questionnaires and to collect additional information to answer Research Question #2. Interviews were designed to identify and explore in more depth institution-specific critical factors which have and continue to influence administrator and faculty perceptions of the importance of formal outcomes assessment. The first area addressed in the interview strategy was **general information** relating to the specific characteristics of the institutions and individual respondents. The second area focused on how individuals had been **encouraged** to regard formal outcomes assessment as an important part of one's job. The third area

focused on institution-specific assessment **procedures** and measurement **instruments** which administrators and faculty either selected or developed. The fourth area concerned institution/department-specific **activities** which were designed to sustain or enhance existing perceptions of importance. The final area addressed any **additional comments** on assessment that an interviewee wanted to make related to accountability, funding, morale/satisfaction, faculty development, curriculum improvement, teaching, and student learning.

RESULTS

This section of this paper has been divided into two major parts, each dealing with one of the two research questions, respectively. Each major part has been further subdivided to provide a breakdown of quantitative and qualitative findings pertinent to each question.

PART I: Quantitative Data Analyses of Research Question #1

Of the 1,101 mailed-questionnaires distributed to CAOs, ACs, DDHs, and FAC, 810 completed questionnaires were returned (73.6%). For purposes of this paper, only the responses to the common items on both versions have been examined within the context of the first research question of this study:

> What are the past, present, and predicted perceptions of the importance of formal outcomes assessment among and within critical groups (i.e., provosts/academic deans, assessment coordinators, deans/division/department heads, and faculty) across types of institutions?

The hypotheses of interest in this portion of the study are the within-subjects effects: the **YEAR** effect and the interactions with the **YEAR** variable--**TYPE * YEAR**, **PRI/RES * YEAR**, and **TYPE * PRI/RES * YEAR**.

Year Effect

Note that for each of the six analyses, **YEAR** was statistically significant ($p < .05$). The Summary ANOVA tables for these six analyses are found in Appendix #1 (see pages 50, 51, and 52). The means and standard deviations for each dependent variable for each year are found in Table 1 (see page 12). For the **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** variables, these data indicate that, as expected, the means for 1990 for the total group of respondents were significantly higher than were the means for 1987. For all of the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** variables, the means were significantly higher for 1990 than for 1987, and then significantly lower for 1996 than for 1990. These data illustrate the increase in the importance of the assessment mandate from 1987 to 1990 which reflects the increased emphasis given the mandate by SCHEV. Also illustrated is the fact that, if this emphasis and persistent support do not continue through 1996, the importance of the mandate will wane.

Now consider the perceived importance across the four different respondent groups within each of the two years. These data illustrate that all respondents indicated that the **PERCEIVED**

Table 1

YEAR MAIN EFFECT

	1987		1990		1996	
	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.
INVOLVEMENT	1.246	(1.165)	1.892	(1.047)		
UNDERSTANDING	1.518	(1.083)	2.272	(0.799)		
IMPORTANCE (CAO)	6.951	(2.805)	8.245	(1.933)	6.219	(2.839)
IMPORTANCE (AC)	7.983	(2.372)	9.016	(1.457)	7.326	(2.744)
IMPORTANCE (DDH)	5.426	(2.652)	7.093	(2.313)	5.388	(2.721)
IMPORTANCE (FAC)	3.654	(2.032)	5.168	(2.148)	4.035	(2.311)

IMPORTANCE of the assessment coordinators (**IMPAC**) and the chief academic officer (**IMPCAO**) were substantially higher than for the deans/department heads (**IMPDDH**) and the faculty (**IMPFAC**). These data reflect the fact that the assessment coordinators and the chief academic officers had been more involved in planning the assessment program and thus had better understood the process than had the deans/department heads and the faculty.

Type * Year Interaction

The **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect was statistically significant for five of the six dependent variables ($p < .05$). The means and standard deviations for this interaction are found in Table 2 (see page 14); these means are plotted in Figure 1 (see pages 15, 16, and 17).

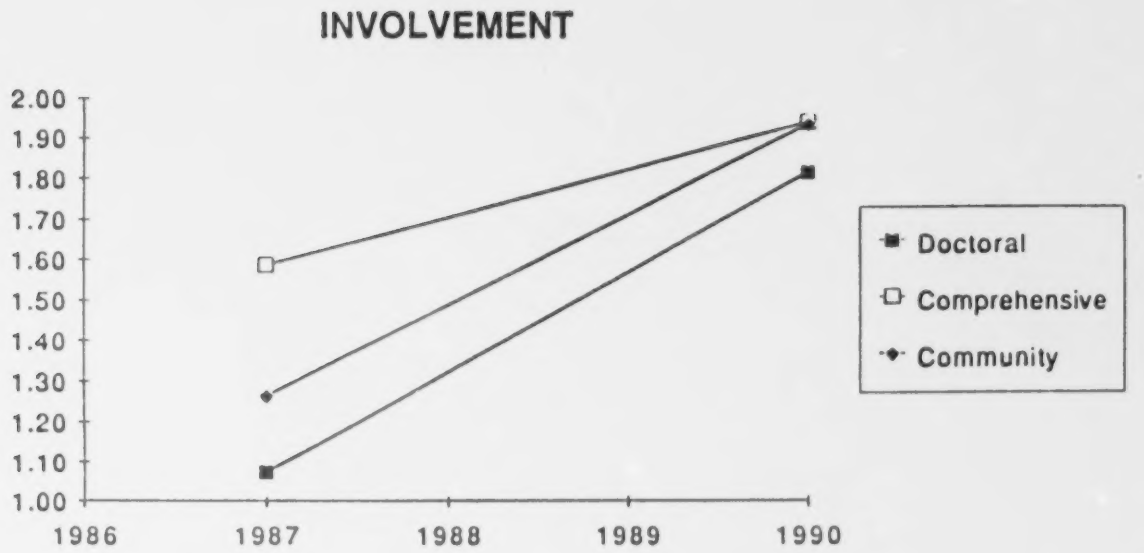
Note that for both the **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** variables, the pattern of interaction is the same. For both variables, the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities had significantly larger means in 1987 (1.588 and 1.829) than did the respondents from the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (1.074 and 1.362) or the **COMMUNITY** colleges (1.264 and 1.528). While the means for 1990 were significantly larger for all three groups on both variables, the 1990 means were not significantly different among the three groups on both variables. Thus, for both variables, the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities indicated that they were more

Table 2

TYPE * YEAR INTERACTION

	1987		1990		1996	
	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.
*INVOLVEMENT						
Doctoral Granting	1.074	(1.126)	1.818	(1.073)		
Comprehensive	1.588	(1.167)	1.941	(1.028)		
Community College	1.264	(1.167)	1.936	(1.032)		
*UNDERSTANDING						
Doctoral Granting	1.362	(1.129)	2.245	(0.837)		
Comprehensive	1.829	(1.003)	2.370	(0.711)		
Community College	1.528	(1.059)	2.283	(0.793)		
*IMPORTANCE-CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER						
Doctoral Granting	5.956	(2.877)	7.469	(2.212)	5.234	(2.698)
Comprehensive	8.412	(2.156)	8.906	(1.593)	6.941	(2.556)
Community College	6.952	(2.757)	8.488	(1.725)	6.525	(2.847)
*IMPORTANCE-ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR						
Doctoral Granting	7.521	(2.447)	8.716	(1.700)	6.900	(2.745)
Comprehensive	8.876	(1.551)	9.087	(1.359)	7.882	(2.245)
Community College	7.919	(2.486)	9.201	(1.293)	7.450	(2.835)
*IMPORTANCE-DEPARTMENT HEAD						
Doctoral Granting	4.594	(2.453)	6.292	(2.328)	4.588	(2.558)
Comprehensive	5.265	(2.559)	6.824	(2.229)	5.322	(2.401)
Community College	5.919	(2.701)	7.641	(2.185)	5.820	(2.818)
*IMPORTANCE-FACULTY						
Doctoral Granting	3.206	(1.809)	4.410	(1.944)	3.374	(1.946)
Comprehensive	3.632	(1.949)	5.090	(2.109)	3.925	(2.266)
Community College	3.891	(2.137)	5.641	(2.141)	4.458	(2.425)

Figure 1


INVOLVEMENT
2.00
1.90
1.80
1.70
1.60
1.50
1.40
1.30
1.20
1.10
1.00
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
Doctoral
Comprehensive
Community

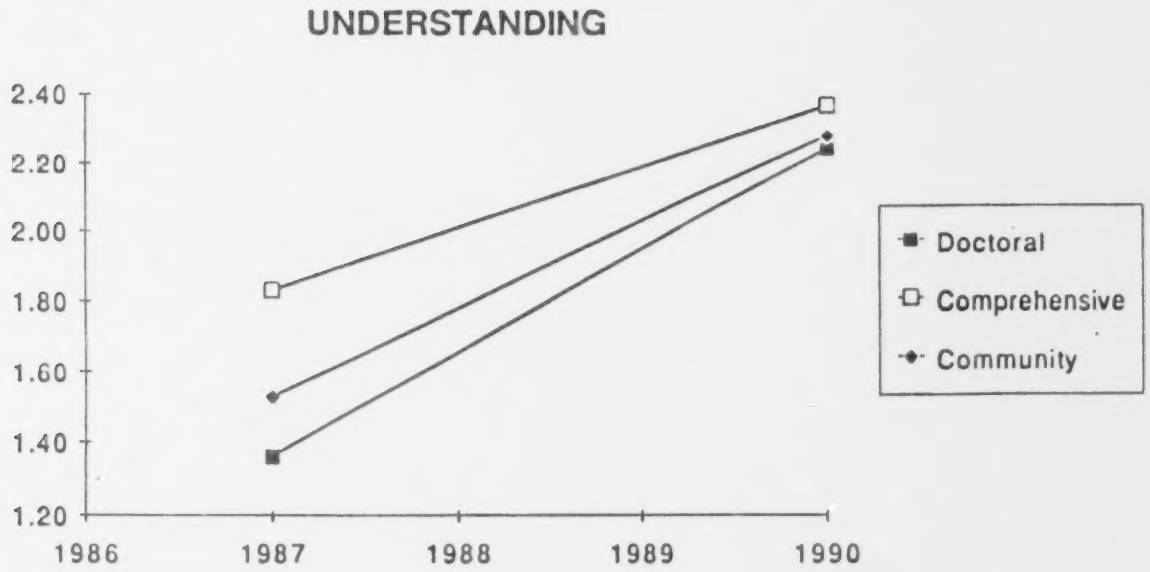
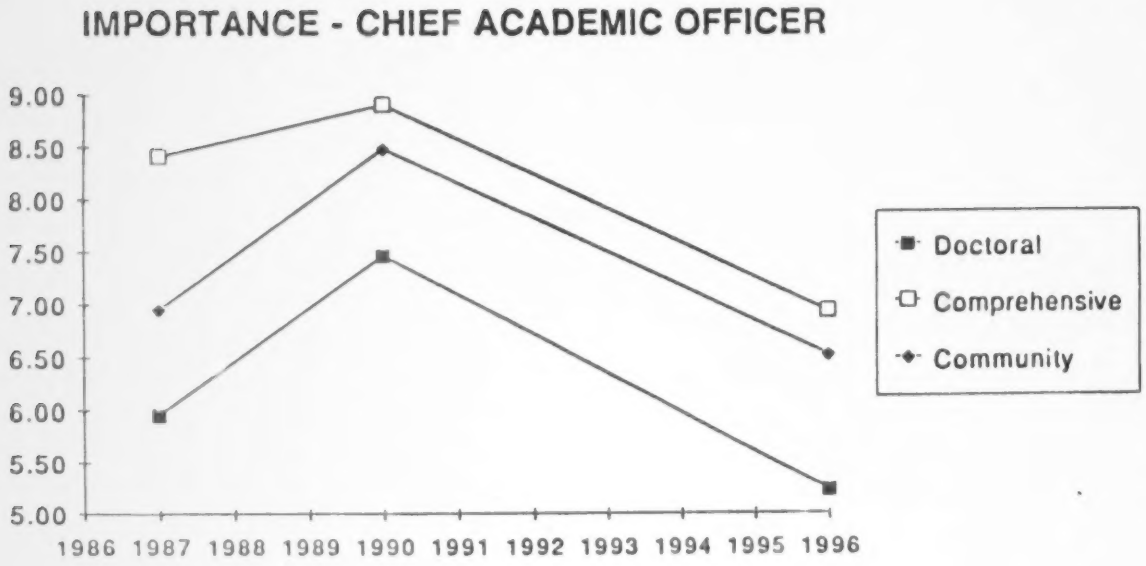

UNDERSTANDING
2.40
2.20
2.00
1.80
1.60
1.40
1.20
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
Doctoral
Comprehensive
Community

Figure 1 continued



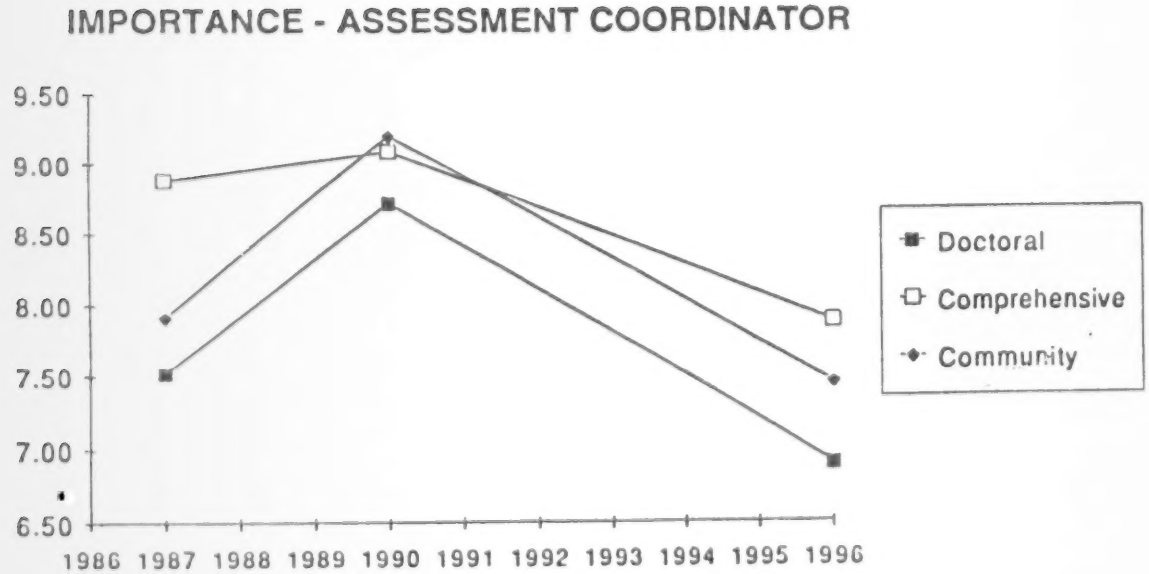
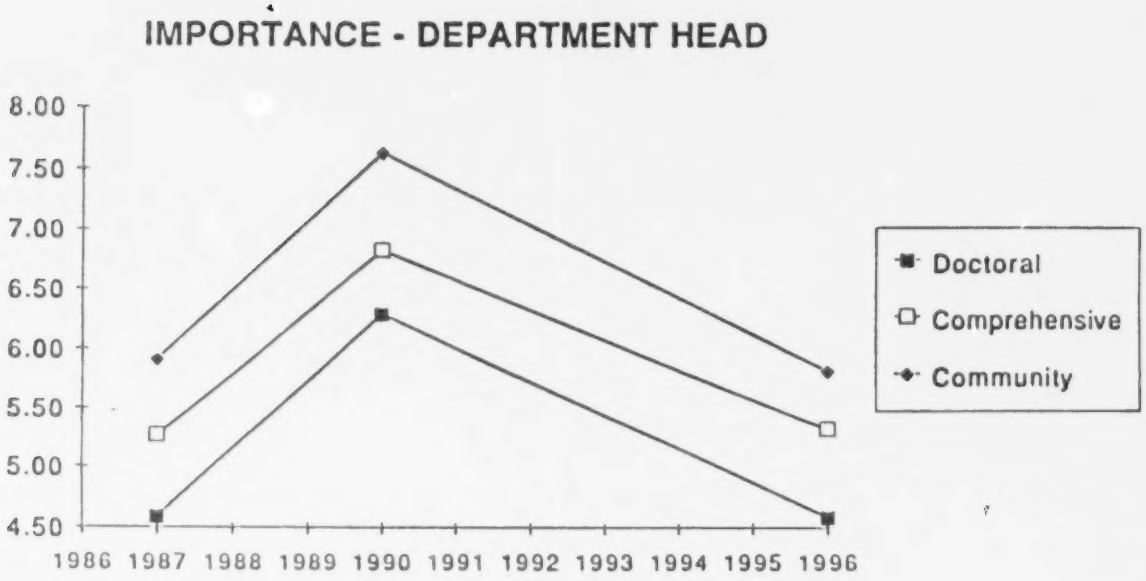
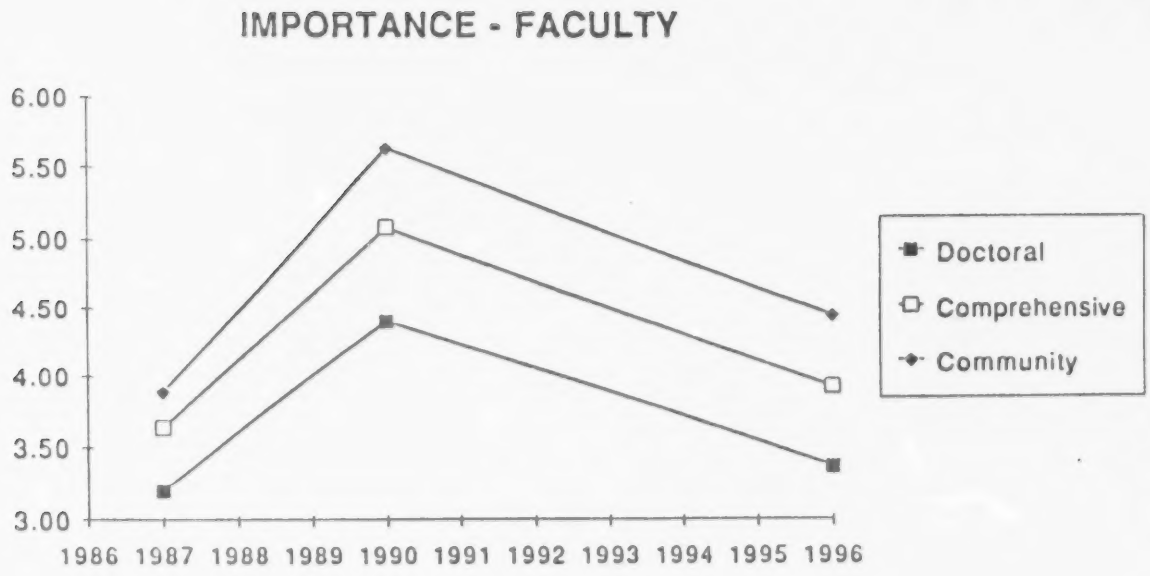


Figure 1 continued





involved in the development of the overall assessment plan and better understood the plan in 1987 than those respondents from the other two types of institutions. However, while all the respondents indicated a significant increase in both the degree of **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** from 1987 to 1990, there were no differences among the three groups on the two variables in 1990.

Now consider the **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect for the dependent variables concerned with the respondents' **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** of the formal outcomes assessment process by the chief academic officer (**IMPCAO**), the assessment coordinator (**IMPAC**), the deans/department heads (**DDH**), and the faculty (**IMPFAC**). The means and standard deviations for these variables are also found in Table 2 (see page 14); the means are also plotted in Figure 1 (pages 16 and 17).

For the perceived importance by the chief academic officer (**IMPCAO**), the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities had a significantly higher mean for 1987 (8.412) than did the respondents from the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (5.956) and the **COMMUNITY** colleges (6.952). For 1990, the means for the perceived importance for all groups were significantly higher than the 1987 means for all groups; the mean for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (7.469) was significantly lower than for the other two groups. These data indicate that the chief academic officers as a total

group were convinced that SCHEV was very serious about the mandate; however, there was not uniformity in the degree of perceived importance. Projecting ahead in time to 1996, the means for all three types of CAOs were significantly lower than the 1990 means. Again, the mean for the DOCTORAL granting universities (5.234) was significantly lower than for the other two groups. From these data, it is apparent that the respondents from the COMPREHENSIVE colleges/universities believed that the chief academic officers at their institutions viewed the assessment process with a higher level of perceived importance than did the respondents from the COMMUNITY colleges and the DOCTORAL granting universities for 1987 and 1990, as well as projecting ahead to 1996. The perceived importance of the assessment process was always lower for the chief academic officer from the DOCTORAL granting universities for all three years.

A similar TYPE * YEAR interaction was found for the respondents' perceived importance of the formal assessment process by the assessment coordinator (AC). For 1987, the mean for the perceived importance for the respondents from the COMPREHENSIVE colleges/universities (8.876) was significantly higher than for COMMUNITY colleges (7.919) and DOCTORAL granting universities (7.521). While the means for all three types of ACs were significantly higher for 1990 than for 1987, the difference

among the means was not statistically significant. Projecting ahead for 1996, the means for all three types of **ACs** were significantly lower than for 1990 with the mean for **DOCTORAL** granting universities (6.900) lower than the **Community** colleges (7.450) and **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities (7.882). As above, the perceived importance by the assessment coordinator was always higher at the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and always lower at the **DOCTORAL** granting universities. These data tend to confirm the fact that, for the most part, the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/ universities had an assessment coordinator in place in 1987. For the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities and the **COMMUNITY** colleges, the assessment coordinators were not employed until later--but were in place by 1990.

The **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by deans/department heads (**IMPDDH**) was different than for the first two **IMPORTANCE** variables discussed above. For all three years, the means for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** for the respondents from the **COMMUNITY** colleges was higher than the means for the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and in turn higher than the means for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. For 1987, there was a significant difference between the means for the **COMMUNITY** colleges (5.919) and the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities

(5.265); both these means were significantly higher than the mean for the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (4.594). For 1990, the means for all three types of **DDHs** were significantly higher than for 1987; for 1996, the means were significantly lower than for 1990. For both 1990 and 1996, the differences among the means were all significant. For these data, it is important to consider the changes from 1987 to 1990 for the three types of institutions. Note that the greatest change in perceived dean/department head importance was for the **COMMUNITY** colleges followed by the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities and then the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities. This differential in the magnitude of the differences is a function of the size and complexity of the types of institutions (i.e., the smaller and less complex community colleges had the greatest change from 1987 to 1990).

The **TYPE * YEAR** interaction effect for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by faculty (**IMPFAC**) was different from all the other three **IMPORTANCE** variables. For all three years, the means for the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** for the respondents from the **COMMUNITY** colleges was higher than the means for the respondents from the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and in turn higher than the means for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. For 1987, there was no difference between the means for the **COMMUNITY** colleges (3.891) and the **COMPREHENSIVE**

colleges/universities (3.632); both these means were significantly higher than the mean for the **DOCTORAL** granting universities (3.206). For 1990, the means for all three groups were significantly higher than for 1987; for 1996, the means were significantly lower than for 1990. For both 1990 and 1996, the differences among the means were all significant. For these data, it is important to consider the changes from 1987 to 1990 for the three types of institutions. Note that the greatest change in perceived faculty importance was for the **COMMUNITY** colleges followed by the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and then the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. This differential in the magnitude of the differences, again, is a function of the size and complexity of the types of institutions.

In summary up to this point, inspection of the data in Table 2 reveals that, for all three years, the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the assessment coordinator and the chief academic officer is substantially higher than for the deans/department heads and faculty. The **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** is always lowest for all types of faculty and is always the lowest for the respondents from the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities on all four variables.

Primary Responsibility * Year Interaction

Now consider the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect. This effect was not statistically significant ($p > .05$) for the **INVOLVEMENT** and **UNDERSTANDING** variables, but was statistically

significant for all four **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** variables ($p < .05$). The means and standard deviations for these variables are found in Table 3 (see page 24); the means are plotted in Figure 2 (see pages 25, 26, and 27).

While the interaction was not significant for either the **INVOLVEMENT** or **UNDERSTANDING** variable, it is interesting to note that for all three groups (administrators, deans/department heads, and faculty), their involvement in the development of the institution's plan and their understanding of it were higher for 1990 than for 1987. For both 1987 and 1990, the administrators (chief academic officers and assessment coordinators) indicated that they were significantly more involved and better understood the assessment project than did the deans/department heads. The deans/department heads, in turn, indicated more involvement and better understanding than did the faculty.

For the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect for the four dependent variables concerned with the respondents' **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** of the formal assessment process by the chief academic officer **(IMPCAO)**, the assessment coordinator **(IMPAC)**, the deans/department heads **(IMPDDH)**, and the faculty **(IMPFAC)**, the patterns are similar for the first two variables **(IMPCAO** and **IMPAC)**; likewise, the patterns are similar for the last two variables **(IMPDDH** and **IMPFAC)**.

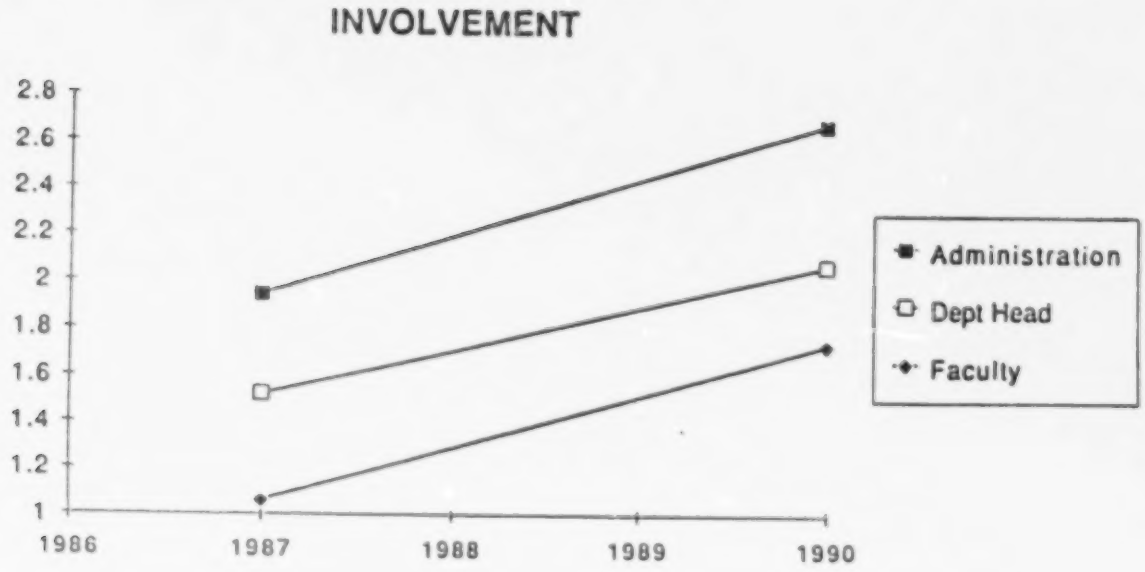
Consider the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the chief academic officer **(IMPCAO)**. For both 1987 and 1990, there were no

TABLE 3

PRIMARY/RESPONSIBILITY * YEAR INTERACTION

	1987		1990		1996	
	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.	mean	st.d.
*INVOLVEMENT						
Administration	1.946	(1.299)	2.676	(0.681)		
Department Head	1.523	(1.133)	2.070	(0.919)		
Faculty	1.061	(1.111)	1.738	(1.078)		
*UNDERSTANDING						
Administration	2.125	(1.176)	2.847	(0.407)		
Department Head	1.779	(1.052)	2.479	(0.716)		
Faculty	1.343	(1.041)	2.138	(0.817)		
*IMPORTANCE-CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER						
Administration	6.773	(2.963)	8.517	(1.547)	7.218	(2.266)
Department Head	7.090	(2.766)	8.091	(2.244)	6.612	(2.884)
Faculty	6.864	(2.815)	8.284	(1.812)	5.840	(2.839)
*IMPORTANCE-ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR						
Administration	8.242	(1.921)	9.273	(1.130)	8.540	(1.460)
Department Head	8.535	(1.910)	9.127	(1.420)	8.000	(2.452)
Faculty	7.671	(2.561)	8.937	(1.521)	6.857	(2.898)
*IMPORTANCE-DEPARTMENT HEAD						
Administration	4.283	(2.335)	6.877	(1.753)	5.685	(2.401)
Department Head	5.622	(2.514)	7.123	(2.305)	5.698	(2.827)
Faculty	5.425	(2.742)	7.097	(2.390)	5.171	(2.717)
*IMPORTANCE-FACULTY						
Administration	3.222	(2.033)	5.758	(1.857)	4.925	(2.328)
Department Head	3.729	(2.062)	5.205	(2.231)	4.106	(2.474)
Faculty	3.648	(2.016)	5.083	(2.133)	3.892	(2.211)

Figure 2


INVOLVEMENT
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
2
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
Administration
Dept Head
Faculty

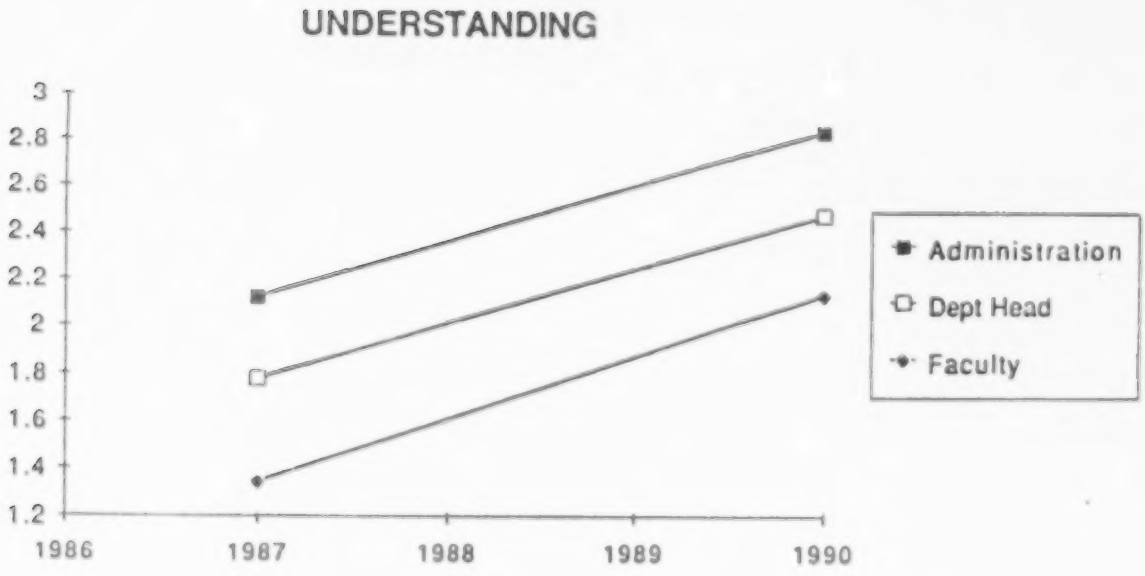
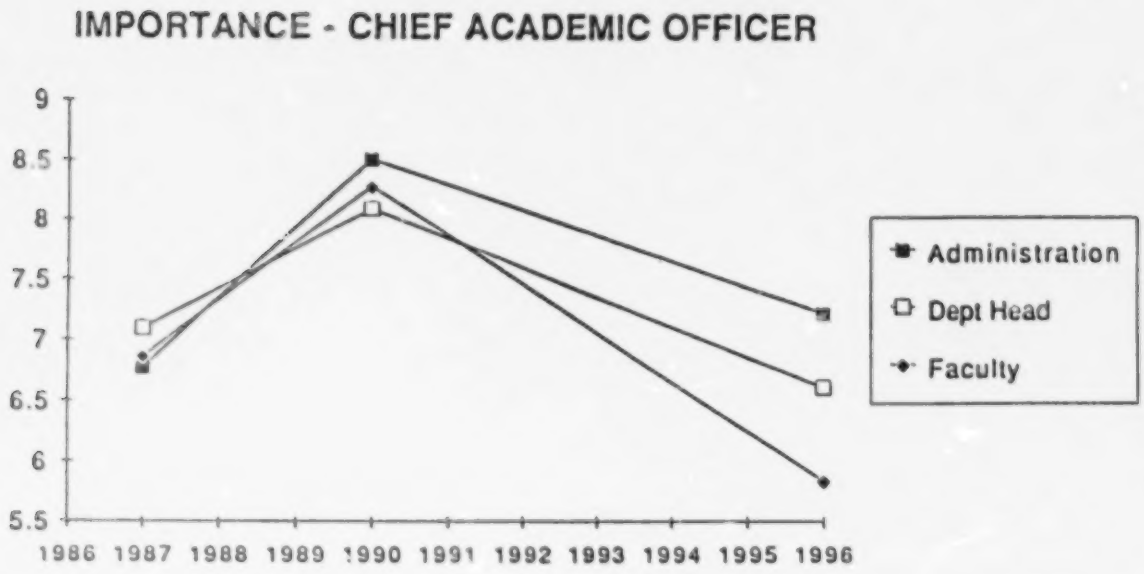

UNDERSTANDING
3
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
2
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
Administration
Dept Head
Faculty

Figure 2 continued



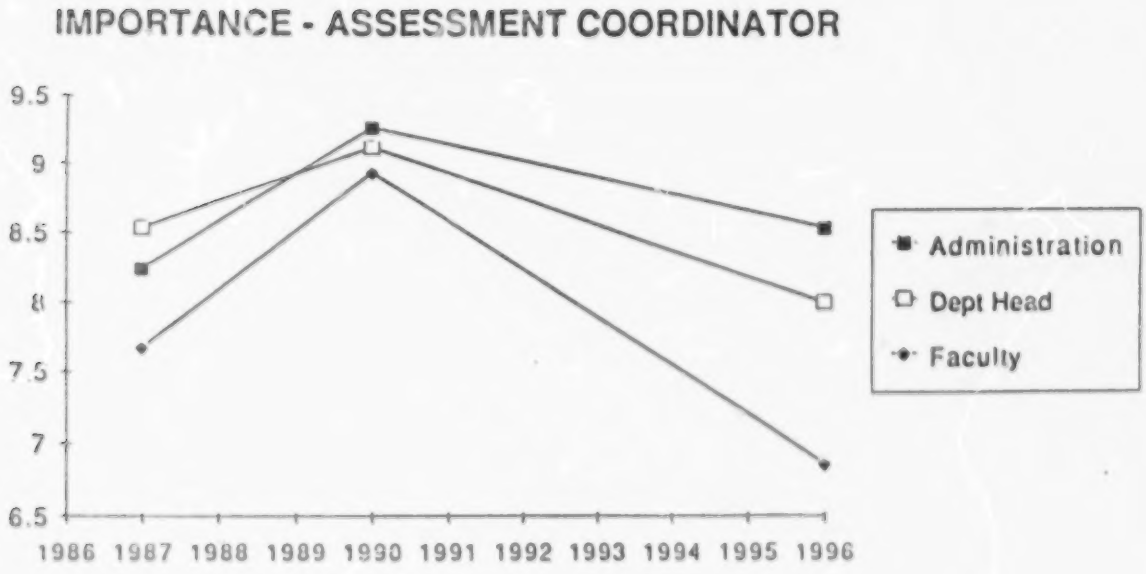
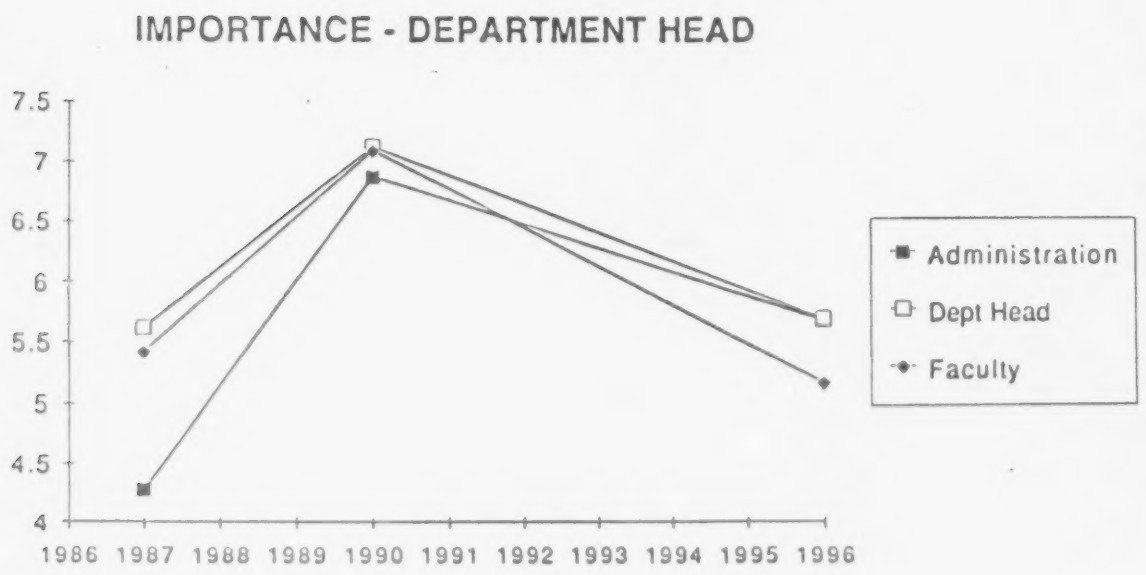
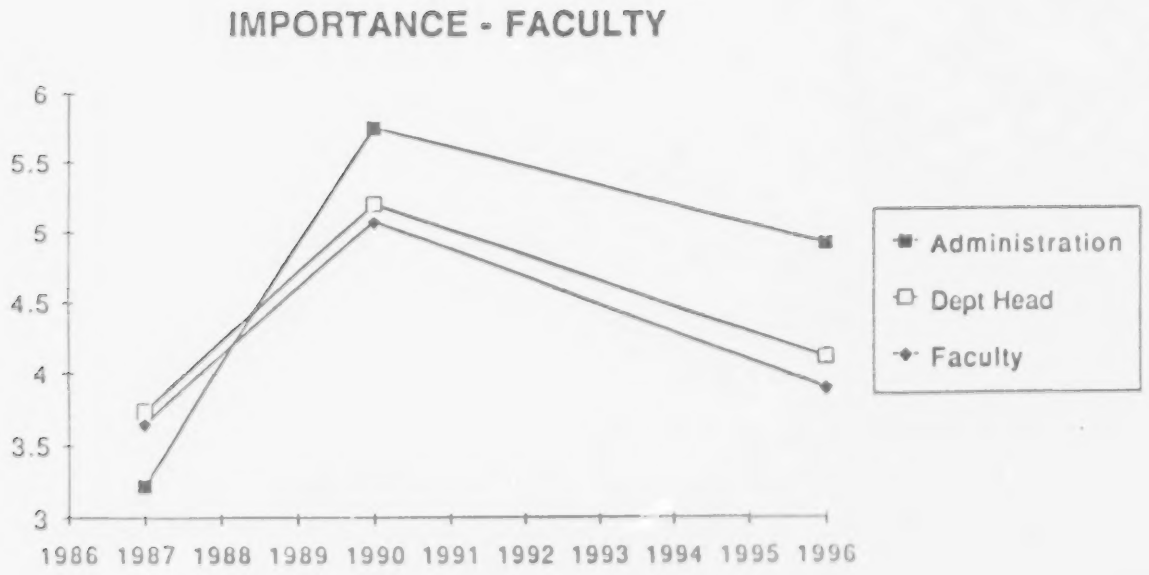


Figure 2 continued





differences among the means for the three groups. However, projecting ahead for 1996, the mean for the administrators (7.218) was significantly higher than the mean for the deans/department heads (6.612) which, in turn, was significantly higher than the mean for the faculty (5.840). These data indicate that both the administrators and the deans/department heads expect the importance given to assessment by the chief academic officer to decline for 1996. More importantly, the faculty expect the importance given to assessment by the chief academic officer to decline even more.

Regarding the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect for the dependent variable concerned with the respondents' **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the assessment coordinators **(IMPAC)**, there was a significant difference for 1987 between the mean for faculty respondents (7.671) and both the administrators (8.242) and the deans/department heads (8.535). That is, the faculty had a lower perception of the importance given to the overall assessment program by the assessment coordinator than did the other two groups. For 1990, there were no differences among the group means for the three groups. However, projecting ahead to 1996, the mean for the administrators (8.540) was significantly higher than for the deans/department heads (8.000), which, in turn, was higher than for the faculty (6.857). Again, these data indicate that, while both the administrators and deans/department heads

would expect the importance given to assessment by the assessment coordinator to decline in 1996, the faculty would expect an even larger decline.

The data for the **PRI/RESP * YEAR** interaction effect for both the **PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE** by the deans/department heads **(IMPDDH)** and the faculty **(IMPFAC)** can be considered together. For 1987, for both variables, administrators had a significantly lower perception of the importance given to assessment by the deans/department heads (4.283) and by the faculty (3.222) than did the deans/department heads (5.622 and 3.729) and the faculty (5.425 and 3.648). These data again confirm that the administrators (chief academic officers and assessment coordinators) had been more involved in planning the assessment program, had a better understanding of the process, and, thus, had lower expectations for deans/department heads and faculty in 1987 regarding assessment. For the variable **IMPDDH**, in 1990, there were no differences among the means for the three groups, but the change for the administrators was greater than for the other two groups (4.283 to 6.877) indicating that their expectations increased as the deans/department heads became more involved in the process. Note for the variable, **IMPFAC**, this increase from 1987 to 1990 (3.222 to 5.758) in perceived importance by the faculty was even greater, indicating an even greater expectation for faculty involvement. These data tend to

illustrate that the administrators are really hoping that the faculty will begin to assume ownership for assessment. The 1996 data, however, also tend to illustrate that without external requirements these administrators, along with deans/department heads and faculty, foresee a substantial decline in perceived importance from 1990 levels.

Summary of Part I

At this point, the quantitative data indicate that the chief academic officers and the assessment coordinators had been more involved in the development of the institution's assessment plan, better understood the process, and had a higher perceived importance than did the deans/department heads or the faculty. While this pattern was consistent for all three types of institutions, the involvement, understanding, and importance were higher for the **COMPREHENSIVE** colleges/universities and **COMMUNITY** colleges than for the **DOCTORAL**-granting universities. Most critically, however, is the decrease in the perceived importance given to assessment by the respondents from 1990 to 1996. These quantitative data are further explored and reinforced in the following discussion of the qualitative findings of this study.

PART II: Qualitative Data Analyses of Research Question #2

Written comments from 509 of the 810 returned mailed-questionnaires and oral statements from 67 follow-up interviews were often lengthy. In 43 cases, additional pages of comments,

copies of articles that supported various positions, and copies of campus assessment newsletters, memos, and reports accompanied returned mailed-questionnaires or were received during interviews. Cross-referencing and cross-validating over 300 pages of notes led to the determination that roughly 70% of all comments contained common concerns, criticisms, praises, or mixtures of all three. All findings in the following subsections have been presented in the order of, first, negative viewpoints, second, positive viewpoints, and finally, mixed viewpoints and concerns.

For purposes of this paper, the following analyses of factors common across all types and groups serve as an answer to Research Question #2:

> What critical factors (i.e., organizations, individuals, attitudes, beliefs, activities, procedures, instruments, etc.) have influenced administrator and faculty perceptions of the importance of formal outcomes assessment across all institutions being studied?

A common factor was one that had to be voiced by at least 50% of all commenters from each type of institution and personnel group. Eight common factors emerged from the data and have been presented in descending order of frequency.

SCHEV's Role

Over 90% of all commenters spoke of the role that the State Council of Higher Education has played in initiating and sustaining Virginia's assessment efforts thus far.

Approximately 25% of these individuals, fairly evenly distributed across type and group, referred to SCHEV's role in strong negative language. Typical words and phrases included "SCHEV threats," "edits," "intrusions," "just another SCHEV fad," "another ridiculous educational fad created by bureaucrats and politicians who have nothing better to do," and "another example of centralized authority trying to standardize higher education." Activities and reports were criticized as "meaningless busy work," and others said SCHEV had "alienated" administrators and faculty.

Approximately 5% of this overall 90% referred to SCHEV's role in strong positive language. SCHEV's "reasonable attitudes," "flexibility," "persistence in encouraging faculty involvement," "praise" of specific assessment activities, "national leadership," and "dedication" were cited.

Approximately 70% of this 90%, fairly evenly distributed across type and group, referred to SCHEV's role with mixed evaluations. Whether beginning with negative descriptors such as "inconvenient," "unrealistic," "unreasonable" reporting requirements or with more neutral, matter-of-fact terms such as "SCHEV's mandate," "requirements," "criteria," or "guidelines," most of these commenters went on to talk about how outcomes assessment was "important," "a sound idea," and "something we should do if we aren't already doing it." Referring to reporting

deadlines, phrases such as "frustrating" and "much less than full faculty involvement" were frequently followed by sentiments such as "necessary but difficult external reporting requirements." "Early confusion and frustration" were generally attributed to SCHEV's "lack of direction," "vagueness," and "ambiguity," but others concluded that perhaps SCHEV was not completely at fault. As one doctoral-granting university department head surmised,

> The process had to start somewhere, and I believe that perhaps SCHEV had communicated more than many of us were told in 1987. I can't believe this just suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Maybe some of our people knew that it was coming but just ignored it or felt they would save us the trouble by dealing with it themselves. That's happened before.

Whatever the cause, according to many of these observers, the resulting initial distrust shaped negative faculty attitudes and "never gave assessment a chance to prove its worth."

Over half of those who criticized SCHEV's "early difficulties," however, concluded that by 1990 "some progress has been made." They praised SCHEV's more recent efforts "to involve more faculty in conferences and workshops" and to send out "people to talk to our administrators and faculty." In all, SCHEV's pressure was generally credited as being both the critical factor driving assessment in Virginia thus far and, at the same time, the reason faculty initially have been nonsupportive. As one senior humanities faculty member from a comprehensive college observed,

> Top-down required activities have been conducted and

> reports have been submitted. In 1987, SCHEV wanted assessment. I suppose by now a few administrators and faculty in a few places really want it too, but my guess is that it's still SCHEV's game in 1990."

The findings of the quantitative data of this study specifically referring to "Faculty In General" would seem to validate this last observation.

SACS' Requirements

Over 75% of all commenters referred to "SACS requirements," "SACS criteria." or "SACS self-study guidelines." No one referred to SACS before referring to SCHEV, except when considering a future without SCHEV requirements. Typical administrator responses were "SACS will always require assessment even if SCHEV drops its reporting requirement" and "SACS requirements are here to stay, and we all had better get used to that fact."

All comments about SACS tended to be matter-of-fact, and commenters cited three reasons. SACS was too far removed; SACS accreditation was needed and desired; and SACS intruded only once every ten years.

Chief Academic Officer's Role

Over 65% of all commenters referred to their Provost or Dean as an important factor. Comments referred to commitment, involvement, and understanding.

Approximately 40% of this 65% spoke negatively. "Lack of leadership" was often followed by such statements as "no one on

campus has ever heard or has rarely ever heard him mention the subject"; "I'm not sure how she feels about it"; and "as long as he doesn't have to do anything about it but sign off on the report, he doesn't care."

Approximately another 40% spoke positively, using terms such as "visible," "vocal," "creative," and "knowledgeable." These CAOs had defined assessment as "a top priority," "an integral part of our every day work," and "a set of benefits rather than processes."

Two additional observations emerged. First, turnover among CAOs often meant momentum had to be regained. Second, committed CAOs selected equally committed assessment coordinators but "worked hard" to continue to be seen as the "driving force" for assessment on their campuses.

Assessment Coordinator's Effectiveness

Similar to the CAO factor, approximately 65% of all commenters referred to assessment coordinators.

In contrast to the 40% negative CAO reaction, only about 15% of these commenters spoke negatively and appeared to address one coordinator at a doctoral-granting institution, two at comprehensive institutions, and two at community colleges. These individuals were described as "uninterested," "the weak link," "going through the motions," and "naive."

Over 75% of this 65% spoke positively, using such terms as "committed," "knowledgeable," "competent," "caring, "and "hard working." Eight coordinators were cited as "respected senior faculty." Effective coordinators "shared faculty concerns," "gave good advice about procedures and tests," "set a pace we could live with," "kept us well informed," and "held committee meetings to a minimum." Coordinator updates, newsletters, reports, presentations before all faculty, and "day to day cooperation" were especially appreciated.

Three additional observations emerged. First, in 1987-88 apparently at least two colleges in each of the four-year types and eleven community colleges either had no assessment coordinator or at least he or she was not well known. Administrators and faculty felt "in the dark" and " many assumed that assessment must not really be that important." Second, the turnover rate appeared to be high. Over 30% of all institutions have had more than one coordinator since 1987-88. Third, commenters especially appreciated coordinators in 1990 because they provided essential clerical and technical support.

Limited Resources

As the fifth most frequently mentioned factor, "lack of resources" was referred to by approximately 60% of all commenters. No one spoke positively about the three concerns that emerged: time, money, and allocation/reallocation

uncertainty.

The most frequent negative comment was that assessment was a "waste of time," figuratively and literally. Typical phrases relating time and working conditions were "I'm already overloaded just with heavy class loads and research" and "I have no time left for anything other than preparing for classes, teaching classes, grading exams and papers, conferencing with students, attending committee meetings, and preparing for classes again." Planning, implementing, interpreting data, and determining curriculum and teaching changes were seen as important, but formalizing these activities and externally reporting was "paper shuffling," and "not an essential part of the assessment process but the part that [has taken] the most time and effort."

A science professor at a doctoral-granting institution spoke to "the heart of this issue" when he said,

> Assessment is an unnecessary formal analysis of what we already informally know but can do little about without more release time, more space and equipment, more staff, in short, more money.

Others asked such questions as "How could assessment have been perceived as so important in 1987 when so little funding was provided for staff and materials and no money was provided for faculty release time?" Others "doubted" assessment's "long term viability" and "chances for survival," given recent higher education funding cuts.

One final concern about resources related to

allocation/reallocation of funds. SCHEV has consistently said funding should not be tied to outcomes, but many commenters worried that SCHEV's position might change. Further, some feared that should institutional funding be decreased in the 1990s, institutions themselves might begin reallocating funds based on assessment results. A department head at a comprehensive institution perhaps best described one important underlying uncertainty:

> Would a department having poorer results lose funding or ironically would it receive an increase to help "pull itself up"? Is it possible that a department having better results might be "punished" rather than rewarded? In either case, data originally designed to be "non-threatening" would, in fact, be quite threatening to either department.

In short, the issues of time, money, and future uses of data have continued to be important arguments working against wide-spread support for assessment. Few expected administrator and faculty support to increase until funding increased, and no one seemed to know when that might be.

Valuable Results

Nearly 60% of all commenters cited the importance of "useable results" to generate campus support. In sharp contrast to the factor of resources, roughly 60% of these commenters spoke hopefully about the potential for results to convince skeptical faculty. They spoke of the "utility of the data" and the "value of the data" offsetting the "trouble and expense of collecting

it." They went on to say that results had to produce "workable," "visible," "practical," "positive" changes in student, faculty and administrator behavior. In short, results had to produce "valuable" and "significant" improvements in curriculum and teaching, or assessment would "be forgotten by the mid 1990s."

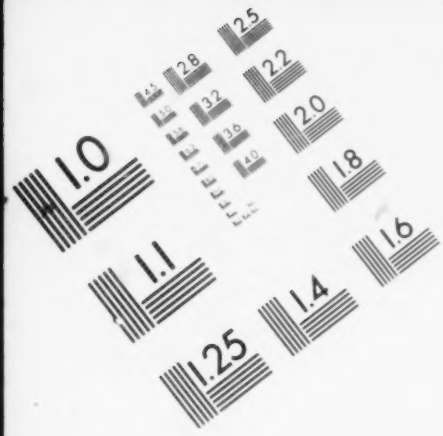
Many professional and vocational/technical program personnel stated that they had been conducting assessment activities for many years. Engineering and Nursing administrators and faculty, for example, were quick to point out that their certification exams and employer/graduate surveys had "consistently yielded valuable results" which frequently led to "significant modifications." They argued that for their programs, "SCHEV's requirements have had little meaning. We didn't start assessing because of SCHEV, and we won't stop when they get tired of filing away reports." Many of these same professional and vocational/technical commenters wondered if results would "lead to important improvements in the Arts and Sciences." While many felt it was time for "the other side" (i.e., liberal arts) to become "accountable," few were convinced that Arts and Sciences faculty would ever accept assessment as an integral part of their programs.

Educating Administrators and Faculty
(Communication, Involvement, and Knowledge)

The factors of communication, involvement, and knowledge

were so frequently mentioned together that commenters appeared to be seeing them as one integrated factor. Only rarely was one mentioned without the other two being mentioned in immediately following statements. Nearly 55% of all commenters spoke of the importance of "educating and involving more and more faculty" if faculty ownership and the "institutionalizing of assessment" were to occur.

As might be expected, no one spoke against the value of communication, involvement, and knowledge regarding assessment, but roughly half of this 55% criticized SCHEV, their CAO, their assessment coordinator, or their division/department head for "poorly communicating," "not encouraging involvement," or "not knowing much about assessment himself." While committee work was often seen as "despised by faculty," it was also seen as "an effective way to both educate and involve at the same time." Commenters spoke of the importance of SCHEV presentations before committees and whole faculties at institutions and suggested SCHEV needed to continue this practice. Commenters noted that administrators and faculty needed to know more about "the history of assessment, especially assessment in Virginia," "how SCHEV arrived at the 'need' for assessment," "just what was this 'need,'" and "how would 'letting everybody do their own thing' satisfy this 'need.'" Some commenters took a more aggressive stand similar to that found in the following comment made by a



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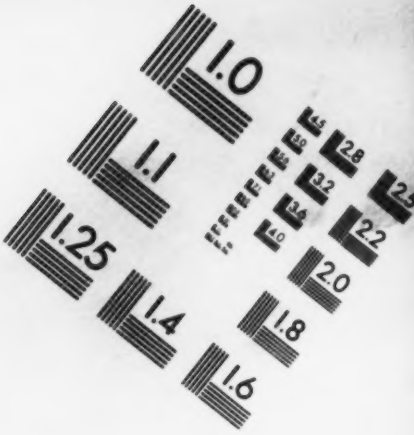

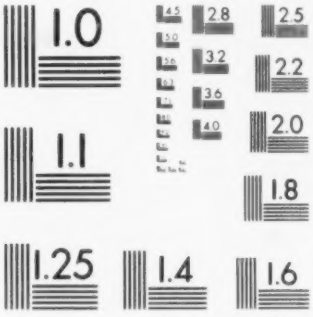

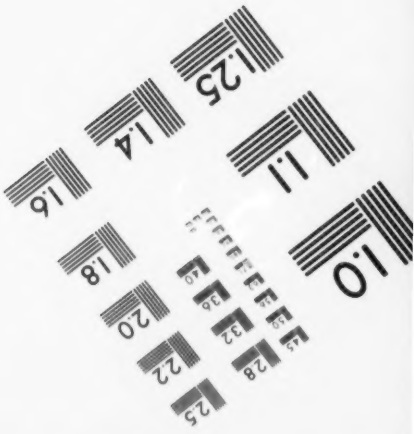

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social science faculty member at a community college:

> From its beginning assessment has been seen as a tool of administrators and SCHEV. As long as that impression exists, the faculty will never see their ownership as anything but an illusion being encouraged to conceal the "real" uses of the data.

These critics stressed that "first impressions" were difficult to change and that communication and involvement arising from in-service workshops and state, regional, and national conferences would lead to "more knowledgeable faculty" who would assume "control" of assessment. "Assessment has important potentials," they argued, but "the data, interpreting it, and actually changing curriculum and instruction all have to be under the direct control of the faculty." For many, current external reporting requirements only sustained "first impressions." In fact, over 30% referred to external reporting beyond the department level as "threatening," "unnecessary," and "counterproductive."

Intrinsic Value of Assessment

Perhaps the most positive factor mentioned by over 50% of all commenters was the concept of assessment itself. While external reporting requirements seemed to represent a barrier to full campus support for assessment activities, virtually no one questioned the intrinsic worth of assessment. Many referred to it as a "sound idea," "an idea whose time has come," and "an idea no professional educator can ever ignore." Others simply echoed

SCHEV's phrase that it was "a means to improve curriculum and instruction." Individuals from professional and vocational/technical disciplines emphasized that they had always performed outcomes assessment because it was "an excellent concept." Still others spoke of how assessment "heightened awareness of student learning rather than faculty teaching." Many spoke of their desire to "keep students first and do the best we can do to help them learn." Others commented on the importance of "continuous feedback" and of "accountability to students, parents, employers, graduate schools, and the community."

About 20% of these very positive commenters, however, felt that the intrinsic value of assessment had already been overshadowed by the negative attitudes regarding external reporting. While reporting "might be a necessary mechanism" to "protect" an "excellent concept" from being "pushed aside by tight budgets and 'greater' needs," many hoped that faculty could eventually ignore "other people looking at the data." One community college assessment coordinator perhaps best expressed this optimism shared by this small group of avid supporters:

> External reporting to the VCCS, SCHEV, or SACS is a fact that is not going to change. My hope and prediction is that assessment will become somewhat less of an administrative priority and more of a faculty owned enterprise, as more and more academic departments steadily become more closely involved. As it becomes more pervasive and routine--institutionalized--as a regular part of curriculum development, I predict its perceived importance may diminish while its actual

importance grows.

Summary of Part II

From eight common factors, a variety of fears, concerns, and hopes emerged. While SCHEV and SACS were clearly seen as the two external forces responsible for "initial assessment successes," SCHEV "top-down pressures," especially its reporting requirements, were also seen as the main reason faculty in general seemed to resist "giving assessment a chance." Campus academic leadership was viewed more positively, and the effectiveness of assessment coordinators was highly rated. Time, money, and "threatening" resource allocation/reallocation concerns were also seen as continuing barriers to wide-spread campus support. While initial results were promising, subsequent important changes in curriculum and teaching were seen as critical for long term faculty support, and as one commenter observed, "It is just too early to tell if important improvements will occur. By the mid-1990s, we should know one way or the other."

Hopes for educating and involving larger numbers of administrators and faculty were supported by the fact that so many commenters stressed the intrinsic value of assessment. Approximately 25% hoped that SCHEV "would keep the pressure on" because "assessment was long overdue." Others hoped it would "eventually succeed," "finally be understood as sound and

important," and "ultimately be faculty controlled." Still others hoped that "the benefits [would] make believers."

CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, perhaps at least four conclusions might be drawn from all data thus far. First, while chief academic officers and assessment coordinators saw themselves and were seen by deans/department heads and faculty as more supportive of formal outcomes assessment, these administrators saw (or perhaps hoped for) an important increase in deans/department head and faculty support from 1987 to 1990. While deans/department heads and faculty likewise saw an increase in support from all four groups in 1990, they still did not see themselves as strongly supporting formal assessment in 1990. They further predicted a substantial decline in their support if external pressures were removed.

Second, across all groups, types, and years, faculty were the least supportive of assessment, and the least supportive of all types of faculty were those from doctoral-granting universities. Perhaps the depth of their negative feelings might best be captured in a statement from one doctoral-granting arts and sciences faculty member: "The state can kiss my assessment."

Third, common factors seemed to be more negative than positive, and the most important factors were forces external to the institutions. This negativism would seem to confirm and to

be supported by the quantitative findings presented in this paper.

Finally, with the exception of roughly a dozen individuals, neither the negativism nor positivism was extreme. Since most respondents and commenters seemed to give low-to-moderate involvement, understanding, and importance ratings, as well as mixed comments, perhaps the most accurate overall conclusion that could be drawn from an analysis of these quantitative and qualitative data in 1990 is that a majority of respondents who have been involved in assessment activities for at least one year feel that administrators and faculty in general remain skeptical about the importance and future of formal outcomes assessment, at least as it is being applied in Virginia. In short, growth in administrator and faculty support has occurred by 1990, but such growth does not represent full "ownership."

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Appendices

Appendix #1

SUMMARY ANOVA

Dependent Variable - - Involvement

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	17.058	2	8.529	5.82	0.0031
PRI/RESP	115.670	2	57.835	39.45	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP	3.451	4	0.863	0.59	0.6710
ERROR#1	1153.674	787	1.466		
YEAR	163.952	1	163.952	203.71	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	7.061	2	3.531	4.39	0.0128
PRI/RESP*YEAR	1.205	2	0.603	0.75	0.4734
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	4.777	4	1.194	1.48	0.2052
ERROR#2	616.505	766	0.805		

Dependent Variable - - Understanding

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	13.524	2	6.762	6.27	0.0020
PRI/RESP	87.749	2	43.875	40.68	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP	5.701	4	1.425	1.32	0.2602
ERROR#1	847.744	786	1.079		
YEAR	288.769	1	288.769	394.70	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	5.277	2	2.639	4.55	0.0108
PRI/RESP*YEAR	0.898	2	0.449	0.77	0.4612
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	6.739	4	1.685	2.91	0.0210
ERROR#2	442.816	764	0.580		

Appendix #1 Continued

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Chief Academic Officer)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	616.233	2	308.117	26.87	0.0001
PRI/RESP	43.771	2	21.885	1.91	0.1491
TYPE*PRI/RESP	13.853	4	3.463	0.30	0.8766
ERROR#1	7533.188	4	3.463		
YEAR	1203.857	2	601.928	300.89	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	69.949	4	17.487	8.74	0.0001
PRI/RESP*YEAR	94.193	4	23.548	11.77	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	46.352	8	5.794	2.90	0.0034
ERROR#2	1866.481	933	2.001		

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Assessment Coordinator)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	148.056	2	74.028	9.57	0.0001
PRI/RESP	212.951	2	106.475	13.77	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP	17.961	4	4.490	0.58	0.6768
ERROR#1	5135.921	664	7.735		
YEAR	846.733	2	423.366	176.06	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	44.289	4	11.072	4.60	0.0011
PRI/RESP*YEAR	81.745	4	20.436	8.50	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	23.718	8	2.965	1.23	0.2762
ERROR#2	2260.347	940	2.405		

Appendix #1 Continued

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Dean/Department Head)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	609.756	2	304.878	23.88	0.0001
PRI/RESP	35.022	2	17.511	1.37	0.2544
TYPE*PRI/RESP	91.551	4	22.888	1.79	0.1288
ERROR#1	9129.824	715	12.769		
YEAR	1244.950	2	622.475	317.25	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	14.550	4	3.637	1.85	0.1163
PRI/RESP*YEAR	72.392	4	18.098	9.22	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	18.920	8	2.365	1.21	0.2921
ERROR#2	2172.021	1107	1.962		

Dependent Variable - - Importance (Faculty in General)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Type	395.922	2	197.961	21.11	0.0001
PRI/RESP	38.274	2	19.137	2.04	0.1306
TYPE*PRI/RESP	26.342	4	6.585	0.70	0.5905
ERROR#1	6807.230	726	9.376		
YEAR	850.714	2	425.357	273.13	0.0001
TYPE*YEAR	22.638	4	5.659	3.63	0.0060
PRI/RESP*YEAR	46.195	4	11.549	7.42	0.0001
TYPE*PRI/RESP*YEAR	2.469	8	0.309	0.20	0.9911
ERROR#2	1901.483	1221	1.557		